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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to identify users of Pennsylvania public libraries and determine their reasons for using the library. In addition, the study provides information describing the impacts and benefits to those users as a result of their contact with the public library. The objectives were to: (1) describe users in terms of their education, age, sex, and household income; (2) determine the reasons for the use of the public library; (3) understand how use of the public library is valuable or beneficial to these users; and (4) describe the role of Pennsylvania public libraries in supporting economic development at both the local and statewide level. A statewide survey of public library users, site visits to 10 libraries throughout the state, and logs of critical incidents of significant impacts provided data. The study found that there are numerous and important impacts and benefits that result from use of Pennsylvania public libraries. Appendices include: Focus Group interviews "Research Method"; "Focus Group Questions"; a participant questionnaire for library personnel and users; "Critical Impact Log Method"; a public services impact log; "Content Analysis Categories Reference Desk Critical Incident Log"; "Pennsylvania Public Library User Survey"; and survey instructions. (AEF)

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ED 419 548

PUBLIC LIBRARY USE IN PENNSYLVANIA: IDENTIFYING USES, BENEFITS, AND IMPACTS

FINAL REPORT

For:

Pennsylvania Department of Education
Office of Commonwealth Libraries
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this study is to identify users of Pennsylvania public libraries and determine their reasons for using the library. In addition, the study provides information describing the impacts and benefits resulting to those users as a result of their contact with the public library. More specifically, the study's objectives are to:

- Describe these users in terms of their education, age, sex, and household income;
- Determine the reasons for the use of the public library;
- Understand how use of the public library is valuable or beneficial to these users; and
- Describe the role of Pennsylvania public libraries in supporting economic development at both the local and statewide level.

A statewide survey of public library users, site visits to 10 libraries throughout the state, and logs of critical incidents of significant impacts provided data to accomplish these objectives. These objectives provide a basis for directing data collection activities that can then assist policymakers, residents of Pennsylvania, and the larger public library community to improve statewide and local public library planning and services development.

This study finds that there are numerous and important impacts and benefits that result from use of Pennsylvania public libraries. There is substantial agreement that many Pennsylvania public libraries:

- Contribute directly to the economic productivity of the local community and the state by encouraging the establishment of businesses, helping residents find jobs, attracting new businesses to locate in a community, and providing information and programs on being a successful entrepreneur;
- Provide services and programs to children, adults, and seniors that simply are not available elsewhere or, if available, would be too expensive for many residents;
- Enhance the overall quality of life and promote the cultural environment in the communities these libraries serve;
- Promote the well-being of individuals and assist them to become more productive in their jobs and in their personal lives;
- Contribute directly to the success of local social service agencies, literacy groups, home schoolers, writers, and others; and
- Provide individuals with customized information services tailored to their unique needs – services that often comprise a critical incident that made these individuals successful or otherwise helped them accomplish their personal goals.

These are but a few of the key impacts that respondents identified as critical to the success and importance of their communities – all as a result of services, collections, and programs from the public library. Indeed, the study suggests that this uniquely American institution, the public library, is often the very heart and fabric that defines a community and contributes to its overall success.

But by and large, the study also finds that many Pennsylvania public libraries provide these and other benefits for their users and communities with extremely limited resources. In a number of instances, the library relies on the good will and good graces of staff who give freely of themselves in providing *pro bono* time and resources to the library and on volunteer contributions from members of the local community.

During the study, library users often did not know or understand the range of impacts and benefits that the library provided the community. Nor did community residents understand that many of these impacts resulted from extremely dedicated and hard-working library staff or that the local and state resources supporting these libraries did not compensate staff for such extra work. There seems to be little understanding of the resources needed and the costs related to operating public libraries. Indeed, expectations of what public libraries *should* be doing are often quite unrealistic given the fiscal realities of these libraries.

Ultimately, however, state and local policymakers, local communities, as well as individual public libraries will need to determine the degree to which significant impacts, such as economic impacts, promote the role of the public library in *that* community and the degree to which the library should be funded to provide such impacts. Currently, as this study suggests, many significant impacts result from Pennsylvania public library services, programs, and resources. The extent to which this can continue in the current financial environment, however, is problematic at best.

A significant next step for enhancing the impacts that result from Pennsylvania public library services is to carefully review the roles and responsibilities of the state and local governments in funding public libraries. This assessment should consider the current funding mechanisms available to public libraries, the degree to which public libraries have adequate resources to accomplish their service roles and objectives, and the degree to which state and local governments have realistic expectations of how well libraries can operate in the current fiscal environment.

If Pennsylvania public libraries are to continue their efforts in providing an array of impacts and benefits – as discussed throughout this report – new initiatives will be needed to provide adequate resources to support public libraries.

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Also at the Office of Commonwealth Libraries, Carol Ann Colyer provided a number of important contributions. She organized and managed a range of logistical concerns related to the duplication, mailing, and distribution of the statewide survey. She also provided the investigators with a range of Pennsylvania public library statistics, organized the distribution of the critical incident log surveys, and generally solved a number of data administration problems during the study. Her assistance was invaluable to the completion of the study.

We also must acknowledge the assistance of the library directors and staff at the 10 sites visited by the investigators. While these people are too many to mention individually, their help in arranging the site visits, organizing the various focus group sessions, providing the investigators with pre- and post-site information, and contributing their time to the study is most appreciated. Many spent extra hours organizing events, ensuring that participants attended the sessions, and making certain that endless logistical details had been handled. Indeed, were it not for this assistance, the wealth of information gleaned from the site visits would not have been obtained.

Of course, thanks also goes to all the librarians in the state that participated in the statewide survey. The response rate from the survey was overwhelming, indicating a significant effort on the part of the librarians to encourage users to complete the survey. We greatly appreciate those librarians for taking time to orchestrate the administration and return of the surveys, Thanks!

The study team included Kimberly Black-Parker, Jennifer Abend, and Robin Bertot. Kimberly participated in the various site visits, organized the meetings, and met with librarians and other focus group participants. Her travels across the state provided her with a powerful perspective on the importance and impacts of public library services in Pennsylvania. Her dedication and commitment to the project and her ability to complete a large amount of work with good humor was a major component to the success of the study. She analyzed the data from both the site visits and from the critical incident log surveys and is largely responsible for the content in Chapter 2. Jennifer conducted a lengthy search of the literature related to impacts from public libraries. She reviewed and analyzed this literature and organized it into the material that greatly assisted the authors in better understanding the topic. In addition she participated in the final editing of the report and handled a range of details that also contributed to the success of

the study. Robin organized the scanning of some 13,600 completed surveys into machine readable data. This work was essential for the analysis of the surveys. All of these contributions were critical for the success of the project.

In short, the authors recognize the important contributions that others have made in completing this study. To all of you, we say thanks, and recognize that this report could not have been completed without your assistance.

Charles R. McClure
John Carlo Bertot
June, 1998

CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

This study finds that there are numerous and important impacts and benefits that result from use of Pennsylvania public libraries. Across the various types of data collection activities, there was substantial agreement that many Pennsylvania public libraries:

- Contribute directly to the economic productivity of the local community and the state by encouraging the establishment of businesses, helping residents find jobs, attracting new businesses to locate in a community, and providing information and programs on being a successful entrepreneur.
- Provide services and programs to children, adults, and seniors that simply are not available elsewhere or, if available, would be too expensive for many residents.
- Enhance the overall quality of life and promote the cultural environment in the communities these libraries serve.
- Promote the well-being of individuals and assist them to become more productive in their jobs and in their personal lives.
- Contribute directly to the success of local social service agencies, literacy groups, home schoolers, writers, and others.
- Provide individuals with customized information services tailored to their unique needs – services that often comprise a critical incident that made these individuals successful or otherwise helped them accomplish their personal goals.

These are but a few of the key impacts that respondents identified as critical to the success and importance of their communities – all as a result of services, collections, and programs from the public library. Indeed, the study suggests that this uniquely American institution, the public library, is often the very heart and fabric that defines a community and contributes to its overall success.

But by and large, the study also finds that many Pennsylvania public libraries provide these and other benefits for their users and communities with extremely limited resources. In a number of instances, the library relies on the good will and good graces of staff who give freely of themselves in providing *pro bono* time and resources to the library and on volunteer contributions from members of the local community. During the study, library users often did not know or understand the range of impacts and benefits that the library provided the community. Nor did community residents understand that many of these impacts resulted from extremely dedicated and hard-working library staff or that the local and state resources supporting these libraries did not compensate staff for such extra work. There seems to be little understanding of the resources needed and the costs related to operating public libraries. Indeed, expectations of what public libraries *should* be doing are often quite unrealistic given the fiscal realities of these libraries.

The study should be seen as a first step in identifying and describing the impacts resulting from library programs, services, and collections. Later chapters in this report will detail these impacts, describe who uses public libraries, discuss the various methods that might be used to measure or quantify these impacts, and offer recommendations to maximize these impacts. No attempt has been made here to assign a dollar amount to the uses and impacts resulting from public library use. Such efforts should be seen as a next step to this study and will require additional research and study. Suffice to say here that for many residents in the state of Pennsylvania, the impacts and benefits of public libraries are not well-understood, nor has the public library community successfully articulated these impacts and their overall importance for users, local communities, and the Commonwealth.

PUBLIC LIBRARY USE IN PENNSYLVANIA

Knowing who uses public libraries and what information and services they use are critical both statewide and locally for planning and financing public library services. Knowing who uses what provides a range of insights that can help the library better meet the needs of its users. Identifying the users of public libraries, however, is not the same as identifying non-users. Thus, it is important to stress that this study focuses on identifying and describing (1) *users* of public libraries, (2) their *uses* of public library resources and services, and (3) the *benefits* or *impacts* that result from such use. Baker and Lancaster (1991) offer an excellent discussion of the differences, similarities, and difficulties in conducting such studies.

This study particularly seeks to document the *benefits* and *impacts* that users receive from their contact with public libraries. It is difficult to identify specific benefits and impacts from individual library services as often there is a gestalt of benefits and impacts resulting from library use over a number of visits. Nonetheless, a study of the Online at PA Libraries Project recently completed by the authors suggests that a broad range of benefits resulted for library users of public access Internet workstations. These benefits included obtaining information for work or personal needs, promoting economic development, encouraging reading and literacy, and expanding the size and nature of library collections (McClure and Bertot, 1997). Indeed, the evaluation of the Online at PA Libraries project clearly indicated significant benefits and impacts resulting from a relatively modest investment of $750,000 from Bell Atlantic to support the purchase and operation of public access Internet workstations in some 200 Pennsylvania rural public libraries.

Despite these and other traditional benefits that result from libraries, Pennsylvania public libraries remain relatively poorly funded compared to public libraries in other states ("Libraries in Distress," 1997). Identifying and documenting not only the reasons people use libraries, but also the impacts and benefits resulting from such use is an important component in justifying existing and future expenditures to improve overall public library services in the state.

Currently, Pennsylvania public libraries are in a transition stage trying to both maintain a range of traditional library services and move into the global networked environment. As shown in the "Libraries in Distress" article, most Pennsylvania public libraries are neither funded for nor prepared to provide high quality services in both traditional and networked situations. Thus, documenting the degree to which public libraries in Pennsylvania affect their users, identifying specific benefits and impacts these users obtain, and understanding how users assess these impacts is an important step in planning for the future development of these libraries.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON PUBLIC LIBRARY IMPACTS

Readers wishing to review additional background sources related to impacts from public library services have a number of very useful sources. Two of the sources are valuable from a bibliographic perspective as they offer excellent entry to the broad range of literature available on the impacts of public libraries. The first, *Dividends: The Value of Public Libraries in Canada* (Fitch and Warner, 1997), offers a bulleted summary of approximately 150 publications and journal articles which pertain to the benefits derived from public library services. *Vancouver Public Library; Report on the Economic and Social Benefits of the Public Library* (John, 1997) has a similarly extensive bibliography and discusses, perhaps in greater detail than the previous publication, the various possible impacts public libraries make. The impacts discussed in each publication range from the educational to the cultural, economic, and democratic.

Two excellent sources are manuals designed to guide interested libraries through the process of either creating greater impacts through the implementation of new or targeted services or to guide libraries in measuring the impact of services already in place. *Helping Business—The Library's Role in Community Economic Development* (Bleiweis, 1997), details why it is important for libraries to be involved in economic development in their communities and, step-by-step, how to get started.

Helping Business discusses an extensive range of topics, including: how to become aware of the needs of the business community, training the library staff who will be providing services to business, examples of specific services libraries can create to aid community economic development, and marketing the library's new business services. *Helping Business* is a valuable resource for libraries considering initiating services targeted to business or for libraries already involved and seeking additional ideas for service. While its focus is on the services public libraries may be able to provide for businesses, it can also be used as a blueprint for forays into other targeted service areas. The manual's clear suggestions for needs assessment, hiring, training, and collection development should be applicable across a wide variety of impact areas, not just business.

The Library's Contribution to Your Community; A Resource Manual for Libraries to Document their Social and Economic Contribution to the Local Community (IER Planning, Research and Management Services, 1998) makes a valuable contribution to the discussion of library service impacts by identifying and categorizing the wide variety of possible impacts public libraries have on their communities. In addition to highlighting the depth and breadth of the library's potential impacts in the community, the manual offers an important classification tool ultimately useful in communicating the library's impacts to the public.

The Library's Contribution to Your Community splits impacts first into social/personal and economic categories. Within the social/personal category, impacts are further classed into personal growth or development, community development, and support to community groups or agencies, with the specific impacts classified under each subheading. Economic impacts are first divided into those providing direct economic impacts, indirect economic impacts, and support to local business or investors before being broken out into specific examples of each type. Importantly, *The Library's Contribution to Your Community* offers a systematic approach to measuring each kind of impact and then offers guidance in communicating the findings to the community. Since accountability to policymakers and taxpayers is crucial to maintaining public support, the guidance found in this publication should aid in effective communication of the benefits libraries provide, which are often not as visible to the community as they could be.

An introduction to the scholarly literature on the subject includes articles by Ellis (1994), Holt, Elliott, and Dussold (1996), Sawyer (1996), and Welch (1994). Holt, Elliott, and Dussold (1996) discuss the difficulty and importance of selecting a framework for quantifying the benefits which arise from public investment in public libraries. Similarly, Ellis (1994) uses the experiences of the High Point Public Library in High Point, North Carolina, in establishing a Business Research Division as a jumping off point for a discussion of the appropriate way to measure library service impacts. Sawyer (1996) and Welch (1994) detail specific contributions, often in terms of dollars, public libraries make to their local communities in a geographic-specific context, Sawyer in Ontario and Welch in North Carolina. Realizing that it is possible to quantify at least some of the impacts public libraries make in terms of dollars, rather than in just subjective terms, is important from a feasibility standpoint for libraries which may need to attempt to do the same. In conclusion, a reading of these sources offers a good overview of impacts from public library services.

STUDY PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study is to identify users of Pennsylvania public libraries and determine their reasons for using the library. In addition, the study provides information describing the impacts and benefits resulting to those users as a result of their contact with the public library. More specifically, the study's objectives are to:

- Describe these users in terms of their education, age, sex, and household income;
- Determine the reasons for the use of the public library;
- Understand how use of the public library is valuable or beneficial to these users; and
- Describe the role of Pennsylvania public libraries in supporting economic development at both the local and statewide level.

These objectives provide a basis for directing data collection activities that can then assist policymakers, residents of Pennsylvania, and the larger public library community in improving statewide and local public library planning and services development.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study relies on a combined quantitative and qualitative data collection strategy that included critical incident service logs by selected public service librarians, a statewide survey, site visits with targeted focus groups of users and other community members, and follow-up phone interviews with users, librarians, and local officials as appropriate. The study began in December 1997, and was completed in May 1998. Data collection activities occurred during February – April 1998. The appendices contain additional detail as to data collection and methods.

Data Collection Efforts

Librarian Service Logs. With the assistance of the District Library Centers (DLCs), the consultants identified two public service librarians, at two different high impact and active libraries within the district, who kept a log of selected significant user benefits and impacts from their public service work in the library. A significant benefit or impact is one that from the *users' perspective* markedly improved their personal, educational, economic, or other key aspect of their lives; the benefit or impact may have had a dramatic effect such that the person was able to accomplish something that otherwise could not have been done had he/she not obtained this service from the library. The purpose of the log was for public service librarians to document and describe incidents of high impact and benefits to users from using the public library. The investigators administered this critical incident log during the end of January and early February 1998. Chapter 2 describes the findings from the service logs.

A second purpose of the logs was to identify a pool of potential users who might be willing to participate in follow-up, in-depth telephone interviews with members of the study team. In effect, the librarians screened users to identify those who believe they received important benefits from the library that could be detailed, later, in an interview or focus group with members of the study team.

Statewide Survey. The consultants developed a survey intended to identify basic demographic information of library users, their assessment of benefits and impacts from library services, and how such benefits might vary across type of library user. The survey was sent to all 625 state-aided public library outlets during a one week period in March 1998. Libraries were asked to administer at least 30 surveys during a one week period in March 1998 and return all completed surveys to the investigators for data entry and analysis. Of the 18,750 surveys sent to libraries, 13,653 (or a response rate of 72.8%) were returned to the investigators for analysis. Chapter 3 describes the survey effort in greater detail.

Site Visits and Focus Groups. The study team conducted targeted focus groups in various sites throughout the state with (1) public library users to identify the services used in the library and the impact this use has made on other activities in which they are involved; (2) local officials and other opinion leaders to determine their use of the library and the degree such use has benefited the local community; and (3) library staff who assessed what they believed were the major impacts resulting from public library services. A script for conducting these focus groups was developed by the consultants. Chapter 2 describes the findings from the site visits.

The study team conducted some 30-40 focus group sessions at the ten sites. Three site visits occurred at an urban location (Central City (CC)), four at suburban locations (Metropolitan Area but not in a Central City (NC)), and three in rural locations (Not in a Metropolitan Area (NO)). These categories are based on Metropolitan Status Codes by the Federal State Cooperative System (FSCS) as used in the *1997 National Survey of Public Libraries and the Internet* (Bertot, McClure, and Fletcher, 1997). Chapter 3 describes the site visits and focus groups in greater detail.

Data Analysis

Some 40 librarians participated in the critical incident log survey providing some 400 descriptions of significant service. The investigators employed a content analysis technique to code and analyze the responses (see Chapter 2). The investigators received 13,653 completed surveys which were scanned and analyzed with standard statistical packages. Analysis of the survey data consisted of conducting basic frequencies and percentages of responses as well as cross tabulations, e.g., comparing urban to rural library use and impacts. The ten site visits included interviews and focus groups with approximately 200 individuals. Each site visit was individually reported and analyzed in terms of identifying impacts and understanding how library services affected users of the library.

Analysis of the data resulting from the focus groups and the user logs were organized to "tell the story" from users' perspectives of:

- The reasons they use the library;
- The uses they make of the library in terms of services and resources;
- The impacts and benefits that were realized by users as a result of using library services and resources; and
- The library's contributions to their educational, economic, and personal well-being .

The analysis and the story from the perspective of the users, opinion leaders in the community, and the librarians provide a "real life" look at the uses of and impacts from the library. In addition, this qualitative data as reported in Chapter 3 provides (1) an important supplement and extension to the data resulting from the survey, and (2) a means to identify information needs and services from the vantage point of the users.

Quality of Data

These data collection strategies allowed the study team to use multiple techniques to accomplish study objectives and obtain quality data. Specific steps in the methodology and data collection were based on proven approaches and strategies (e.g., Rossi and Freeman, 1993; Krueger, 1994; Creswell, 1994). Throughout the process appropriate steps were taken to ensure the collection of reliable and valid data as per standard practice (Brinberg and McGrath, 1985).

STUDY PRODUCTS AND DISSEMINATION

The study results in a number of products that will have a range of benefits to the Office of Commonwealth Libraries and others in the state of Pennsylvania.

- Final Report. The final report details project activities including the data collection and analysis; findings, conclusions, and recommendations; and copies of all data collection instruments. In addition, the report will provide specific suggestions for how the study can be replicated or used in the future to obtain longitudinal data for purposes of comparison.

- Interim Reports. Throughout the length of the study, the investigators provided the Office of Commonwealth Libraries with a number of preliminary and interim reports that were used or presented in various meetings or for delivery at professional conferences.

- Data Collection Instruments and Instructions. The appendices provide copies of the various data collection instruments and instructions used in the study. The Office of Commonwealth Libraries may wish to replicate the study reported here or modify these instruments for future use.

- Database. The resultant database from the survey of Pennsylvania public libraries will be given to the Office of Commonwealth Libraries with a codebook explaining its organization. The Office of Commonwealth Libraries can then do additional analyses of the survey data as needed or desired.

These study products provide the Office of Commonwealth Libraries, the public library community, policymakers, and others interested in the state of public libraries in Pennsylvania with baseline data that can then be used by all stakeholders to develop strategies to improve public library funding and services across the state.

This final report will be made available through the ERIC Clearinghouse. The report will also be made available in the very near future on the homepage of the Office of Commonwealth Libraries <http://www.cas.psu.edu/docs/pde/lib1.html>, and the authors intend on presenting study findings at various professional associations and meetings during 1998.

BENEFITS AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Given the relatively poor funding of public libraries in Pennsylvania as compared to other states, it is essential to better understand:

- Who uses Pennsylvania's public libraries?
- For what purposes do Pennsylvanians use their public libraries? To what degree do they use the libraries for economic purposes and for educational purposes, including lifelong learning?
- What is the impact of this use? How does this use affect Pennsylvanians with respect to their educational, economic, and personal well-being?
- What services and resources do Pennsylvanians want from their public libraries that they are not able to obtain at this time?

The need for better, different, or new library services by users of public libraries provides an important perspective on why current users may not continue to be users in the future.

Findings from this study provides beginning answers to the above questions. The results also provide baseline information by which the public library community can describe itself and its benefits to policymakers, governing boards, and others who make decisions affecting public library services. Such findings can then be used to develop both statewide and local strategies to assess public library services provision with existing funding levels and to propose solutions.

Ultimately, public librarians, trustees, and the Office of Commonwealth Libraries must be able to "make their case" to policymakers as to the uses, benefits, impacts, and needs of public libraries in Pennsylvania. Whether that case has to do with funding, planning, technology development, programming, or other services, it is essential to have statewide data to support such decisions. The data, findings, and recommendations offered in this report provide a beginning perspective to make such decisions. Chapter 4 details selected issues and offers strategies for maximizing impacts from Pennsylvania public libraries.

ORGANIZATION OF THE FINAL REPORT

This chapter provides a general introduction to the study, detailing its purpose and objectives. It also provides an overview of the data collection techniques employed. Additional detail on data collection and methods are in the appendices with brief detail contained in the following chapters that report on that specific data collection instrument.

Chapter 2 reports the findings from the site visits and the various focus groups and interviews conducted at those sites. It also reports findings from the critical incident survey logs completed by librarians at selected libraries across the state. This chapter also summarizes selected key issues from these two data collection activities. In short, this chapter intends to "tell the story" of impacts and benefits from Pennsylvania public libraries from the perspective of the user.

Chapter 3 summarizes findings from the statewide user survey. The findings describe the nature and demographic characteristics of users, the resultant impacts identified by participants from library services, and other findings such as differences in perceived impacts in rural versus non-rural communities. Overall, Chapter 3 paints a picture of who users of public libraries are in Pennsylvania, how these users identify and rank the importance of various impacts, and suggests that perceived impacts from library services vary considerably by gender and by the ruralness of the community being served.

Chapter 4 concludes the study by summarizing overall study findings. In addition, this chapter identifies selected key issues and discusses those issues in terms of how the Pennsylvania public library community might reconsider the role and importance of library impacts. The chapter concludes with a number of recommendations that the Office of Commonwealth Libraries, public librarians, and state/local policymakers may wish to consider as they continue planning for the development of public library services in the state of Pennsylvania.

The study concludes with references, information about the authors, and a number of appendices describing data collection activities. These data collection instruments and instructions can be used and modified in the future to replicate the study or to provide a basis for related types of data collection. The data and findings reported here, however, can be important benchmark data to which future studies can be compared.

CHAPTER 2:
SITE VISITS AND CRITICAL INCIDENT LOGS

The study found multiple uses and impacts from public libraries in the state of Pennsylvania. The investigators identified these various uses and impacts, in part, via two qualitative methods employed by this study. The site visits included a number of focus group sessions and other types of interviews of various groups at public libraries throughout the state. The second activity was a content analysis of critical incidents logs kept by public services personnel of libraries statewide. To a large degree, the intent of this chapter is to report the uses, impacts, and benefits in the words of the library users.

SITE VISITS

The purpose of the site visits was to tell the story of library use in Pennsylvania from the perspective of the library user. The information sought through the focus group interviews include the following:

- Why patrons use the library?
- What library services and resources are used?
- What benefits and impacts result from patrons use of services and resources?
- What contributions do libraries make to the educational, economic and personal well-being of its patrons?

The investigators selected the focus group interview method to yield a large amount of qualitative information and insightful anecdotal data that would be difficult to obtain otherwise, even from open-ended survey questions. This type of information describes the individual, personal needs that public libraries fulfill. The investigators conducted 10 site visits that encompassed 43 focus group sessions or group interviews, and met with a total of 240 people who participated in these sessions at the sites. Greater detail regarding the method used to conduct the site visits and the various focus group sessions and interviews appear in Appendix 2-A. Appendix 2-B is the interview script used for the focus group sessions. Appendices 2-C and 2-D are the questionnaires administered during the focus groups.

General Findings

Throughout the study, a number of key patterns emerged. Many of the patterns resulted from patrons' use of the libraries and many also offered implications for the institutions themselves and for the larger community. In any case, Pennsylvania's public libraries are vital institutions that serve all Pennsylvania residents well. The primary impacts and benefits of public libraries to Pennsylvania residents identified during this study include:

- Promote local economic activity and development;
- Access and training to computers and the Internet;
- Access the Web through Public Libraries;
- Provide information;
- Support to a democratic society and promotion of civic responsibility;
- Support to community agencies;
- Give cradle-to-grave services;
- Support of adult education;
- Source of inexpensive leisure materials;
- Support of local culture and the arts; and
- Provide important services to children.

These as well as other areas of impacts are discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

Libraries Promote Economic Development

Public libraries promote and encourage economic development in the communities in which they are located. Pennsylvania public libraries provide a range of economic support in that they bolster the economic prosperity of their communities, contribute to the economic well-being of the businesses that surround them, improve the market worth of their communities, support their local economies, benefit local businesses, and they offer highly skilled and often highly technical jobs in an automated environment. As summarized by IER Planning, Research, and Management Services (1998, p. 53):

> The library is frequently a resource to the corporate community. Information is provided by means of direct response to reference requests; through the circulation of business oriented periodicals and reports; through interlibrary loan and occasionally with programs directed to the business community. Demographic information for marketing purposes may be particularly important to businesses in smaller communities who may not have access to these data from other sources. Businesses can likely access information from the library in a more cost-effective manner than from other sources. The information contributes to a wide range of business decisions, including compliance with government procedures and regulations, marketing, new product development, the development of business plans, improved management practices, etc.

Pennsylvania public libraries provide economic impacts because they: 1) help people find jobs, 2) exist as an important amenity for the community, 3) provide resources for local businesses and governments, and 4) support and encourage entrepreneurship, small businesses, the self-employed and home-based businesses.

Pennsylvania Public Libraries Help Residents Find Jobs

Public libraries are a key resource for job seekers in the state. Many of the libraries that participated in the site visits also participated in the Workplace Program, a program begun in 1986 through a grant from the Kellogg Foundation to provide resources for job-seekers to make career decisions or to assist them in finding a job or planning a career. Regardless of participation in this program, public libraries have been a chief source of job and career information, a source of job listings, a place for the creation of resumes and cover letters, a place where job seekers and students alike can research careers and job qualifications, where interview candidates can find background information on their potential employer for the interview, and where workers can gain computer skills to qualify for better jobs.

For example, four participants of the Boyertown Community Library patron focus groups alone, reported using the library to help get a job. One reported using the computers to compose resumes and cover letters in looking for a job. Another stated, "I spent every day from the end of June through the end of September using the Internet and reference material looking for a job. I did my resume here and, in fact, the Internet connection that I used here got me my job."

Many welfare-to-work programs make significant use of the public library as a community-based resource available to their clients. They introduce their program participants to library resources and some even require their participants to perform some activity within a public library. Individuals who run such programs, who participated in this study, stress the importance of public libraries as enabling individuals to help themselves. They all expressed hopes that their clients would continue to use the library because they viewed the institution as a vehicle of economic advancement for the underprivileged.

A community leader who works for a company that trains welfare-to-work participants, and who uses the Free Library of Philadelphia, stated:

> We provide computer training for welfare-to-work and laid off workers. I try to empower students to conduct an effective job search because that's the main objective of the program - for them to get new skills and make themselves more marketable. In doing that, we utilize the library's resources and the computers.... We also utilize the different publications to locate job leads and its been very helpful. It has helped students to develop effective cover letters. They have something intelligent to say about the employer from doing research at the library and we've been very successful.... I think the Free Library has been instrumental in helping us reach our bottom line.

Indeed, such contributions by the library do contribute to the bottom line for both the individual and the city of Philadelphia. A "New Choices, New Options" program of the local Philadelphia University's Center for Social Policy relies on the resources of the public library. An administrator of the program offered the following:

> Our program services single parents and displaced homemakers, many of whom are getting off the welfare rolls. What we provide for them is life skills training and job readiness training. We utilize the library very heavily in our job search. We use the Workplace for our participants to find out how to access the hidden job market. It has been very successful for our participants. They come here and they find out how to look for a job other than looking in the Sunday newspaper. We rely on the library very heavily.

The James V. Brown Public Library in Williamsport provides assistance to community organizations that assist job-seekers. The Workskills Development Program assists unemployed workers by helping to improve their reading, writing, and math skills and upgrading their current skills to help them enter or re-enter the workforce. This program offers one-on-one tutoring, small group instruction in math, reading, writing, problem solving, communication skills, GED preparation, and computer-assisted instruction. The library assists STEP, a job training program supported by the Job Training Partnership Act, with meeting-room space and special assistance and programming. This library, and many others throughout the state, also provides similar resources and services to SCORE, the Service Corps of Retired Executives, which is funded by the Small Business Administration. SCORE seeks to assist entrepreneurs to establish their businesses, to remain in business and to expand their businesses.

The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh contains the Job and Career Education Center (JCEC) which was started in 1979 and, according to a library fact sheet, provides services to the "unemployed, underemployed, displaced workers, displaced homemakers, teenage and adult students, potential job or career changers and prospective small business owners." The special services offered include resume writing assistance, publication of brochures, workshops, talks and programs. According to the Center's annual report for 1997, there were 22,989 patrons who used the Center's resources. The Center's staff answered 33,988 questions, and circulated 11,673 items.

Pennsylvania Public Libraries Are Important Community Amenities

The public library as a community institution is a very important amenity. Many members of local government who participated in the study stressed the importance of their community having a good library as an important factor to attracting new businesses to their community. Likewise, many patrons who had relocated to their communities expressed how important a good public library was in their decision of where to live and that the quality of the local library was an influential factor of selecting one location over another. The existence of a good public library is a positive statement about the quality of the community. Good public libraries, the investigators were told, "raise the value of the community in which they reside."

A participant in the community leader session at the Free Library of Philadelphia, who is the president of a community economic development organization, believes that the mere presence of the library stabilizes and attracts patronage to commercial districts:

> If you know Philadelphia neighborhoods at all, especially some of the older neighborhoods, commercial districts are in great transition and there are tremendous challenges they confront, the traditional commercial district that serves the neighborhood population. The library in our neighborhood serves as an anchor in that commercial district.... It draws people to our commercial district.

The same participant claimed the library helps create an environment where formerly failing commercial districts can thrive. He said, "you gotta have something that people can tangibly wrap their hands around that promotes and provides positive activity and gives citizens a reason to have positive interaction with their commercial district or any area whether commercial or residential. The library definitely does that."

In the smaller communities, the public library is often the only cultural and/or educational facility located in the community. The public library is the only source of adult education and public meeting space. Additionally, public libraries in Pennsylvania frequently sponsor programs or events that draw people to the community from surrounding areas. They add to the prestige of their communities.

In the small town of Montrose, the Susquehanna County Historical Society and Free Library is an amenity that developers use to attract development and businesses to the community. According to the county planning director:

> When businesses want to move here, they want to know not only what are the tax advantages and where is your cheap land, but they want to know what the quality of life is. How good are the schools, where is the nearest library, where is the nearest fire station? We don't have a public sewer all over the place, we don't have natural gas that attracts industry, we don't have roads that are straight.

With such deficiencies in mind, the library as an amenity becomes very important to the quality of life of the community and to the types of business and development that the area can attract. One person, recently relocated to Susquehanna County, confirms this: "we came from a town where the library was well-endowed... the kids were a part of the library [of the city of previous residence] and when they moved here their first question was, 'where is the library and when can we go to story hour?'"

Pennsylvania Public Libraries Are Resources for Local Businesses and Governments

Pennsylvania public libraries provide library resources and support to local businesses and governments. Many corporations in the areas where the interviews were conducted either did not have or chose not to retain their own corporate libraries. The public libraries have become the corporate libraries providing critical information resources or very important information that is vital to the smooth functioning and expansion of business. In the same vein, public libraries help individuals involved in the local government conduct research that helps them govern more effectively and helps them better understand social issues and issues important to their constituency.

Informally, many, many individual workers use the public library resources to help them do their jobs better and to increase their work productivity. From school teachers who find materials to support their curriculums to the transportation director who reported using library resources to compose a white paper, public libraries are an indispensable tool to help people become more productive and to perform better on their jobs.

For example, the Allentown Public Library helps support local businesses by providing information services to their employees. A former Pennsylvania Power & Light executive stated:

> My public library has been, and continues to be, a major building block in my life. I lived at the library as a child. Now, in early retirement and as a private consultant, the library is my sole source for business research. It is also the one place where I can concentrate, use on-line services and stay in touch with the world.

A Salisbury School Board member and attorney reported:

> My clients are generally amazed and pleased that I appear completely familiar with their situation. They assume I've had personal experience. There is no way I could possibly have experienced all the problems presented to me, but I have read about practically everything at my public library. My professional success comes from my reading.

One employee tells of using the library to upgrade his computer skills by reading computers books that he borrowed from the library. He stated: "I learned how to upgrade and use computers from books from the library and, lo and behold, the boss says the other day, 'you know we need someone in-house to maintain all these computers' and I said, 'you know, I can do that.'" A city transit administrator who attended the business luncheon used the library reference staff and resources to help write a white paper about regional transportation issues. He claimed that the library was indispensable in completing the paper.

A postal processing center was located near Allentown a few years ago. The workers at the center do repetitive tasks in barcoding the mail. They found that listening to audiobooks while working actually improved the productivity of the workers and decreased the number of processing errors. As a result now, twenty to twenty-five employees of the center check out audiobooks every single day. Most of the audiobook collection remains in perpetual circulation - there is not enough physical space to house it in the event that most of it returned to the library.

Even though it primarily serves the community's interest in current topics and titles, the Boyertown Community Library supports the special libraries of local businesses. One Boyertown patron related that she worked in an engineering library and that the public library provided great assistance to her employer by helping her use her time more effectively:

> I am the only person working in the library and I'm not there full-time…This library has helped me enormously…when I first started working and I needed something for the engineers that our library didn't have, I used to have to call five, ten, fifteen libraries…and it would take a whole day then to find out what I can now find out in five minutes. And that's one thing I really appreciate. It's so close and so handy and they have also helped me get interlibrary loans which has freed me up to do other work. They have helped me with major research projects because there were times when I needed long lists of articles and they would send in the photocopy requests for me.

An example of a resource that promotes economic development is that of the Foundation Center. The Foundation Center of the Free Library of Philadelphia is affiliated with the National Foundation Center. The center has resources on fundraising, philanthropy and proposal writing, non-profit management, grantsmanship, and planning for non-profit organizations. The Foundation Center really makes a difference in the ability to get funding for non-profit enterprises. A library staff member who works at the foundation center said, "our special collection is the only nonprofit resource center of its type in the five county region. We have a big impact on the capacity of small groups to obtain funding information." The resources are very popular. She continued:

> We have basic grantsmanship orientation classes every Tuesday to train people how to obtain grants from private funding. Those are very popular and occasionally we have big seminar programs and we get a speaker to come in. Everything we do is extremely popular because everyone needs money...we get overwhelming demand. We only have one and a half staff members, we have 600 to 800 people a month who use the Foundation Center. Any program that we do is filled to capacity.

There were many testimonials to the impact of the Foundation Center at the Free Library focus groups. A community leader who is a pastor, finds the library instrumental in supporting his economic development foundation's work:

> The work that we do and how it connects to the library involves a wide variety of intersections. We do training of entrepreneurs in our neighborhood, we utilize the library to enhance our clients' skills in business plan development through research on the products that their businesses are trying to launch. We also do some research on marketing technique.

A community leader who worked at a Pennsylvania chapter of a national non-profit organization declared that the resources of the Foundation Center were invaluable in their ability to raise funds because of the research resources. She states: "I would say that just in Southeastern Pennsylvania alone, we raised about half a million dollars a year in grants; they all involve homework and we do that here [at the Free Library]." Another community leader who heads a non-profit that promotes economic development said: "Throughout the history of our organization, which goes back to 1979, our fundraising and our grant development and our capacity to attract dollars is directly attributed to our connection with the Foundation Center. This is where folks in our organization learned to write grants."

There is a similar service offered at the Carnegie Library in Pittsburgh. The testimonials as to the importance and impact of such services were very similar as to those offered at Philadelphia.

The James V. Brown Library at Williamsport has a service-oriented staff that is actively serving the business community through staffing, special programming, and resources. There is a dedicated business librarian on the library staff. There is also a business collection that is housed in its own room. The library has special programming for the business community. There is a monthly Business Breakfast program that was established in 1995 and has had an attendance of over 600 people. The purpose of the Business Breakfast program is to acquaint members of the business community with the library business collection; there is usually a seminar or speaker; and recent topics have included outsourcing, how to start a business, job-hunting via the Internet, using Power Point™, and company intelligence on the Web. Also serving the business interests of the community, are special career resources. This library participates in the Workplace Program and thus provides materials such as resume software, word processing software, career/skills assessment software, and a computer and printer. There is a job/career collection that is also housed in its own room.

The Bellwood-Antis Public Library is a key resource for local small businesses in the Bellwood area. According to one patron, "I own my own business and the library has been invaluable to me for research purposes, copies, and tax information." A library patron who is also on the Antis Township Planning Commission reports that the library is truly an asset and regrets that it is not bigger. The library contains two fully-equipped community rooms that local businesses can rent for business purposes such as presentations, meetings, and small conferences for a nominal fee. The rooms are equipped for business needs with a dry-erase board and projection screen. Both rooms are wired for teleconferencing and Internet access. These rooms both have a kitchenette and dining service for over forty. The rooms can be accessed during hours even when the library is closed. The library is trying to strategically market their space - they have identified three hundred small businesses in their immediate area that they believe do not have conference room resources.

Public libraries assist local government representatives. Local government benefits from the resources of the library such as at the Free Library of Philadelphia. A member of the staff of a city councilman attests to the value of the library to the councilman she serves: "We've used the library for a full range of research pertaining to current social issues and other legislative concerns in order to back up positions we might take - we use the library and it has worked very, very well for us." The resources of the library enable the government process to run more smoothly and enable political leaders to be informed about issues and to help them craft good policy. The councilman's staff member states, "I would tell my staff to know everything that is available in the library because that is the kind of down and dirty street work you do in a political office. People calling up with problems and any resource that you can grab and shape to assist people is really what we need."

Pennsylvania Public Libraries Support and Encourage Entrepreneurs, the Self Employed, Small Businesses, and Home-Based Businesses

Public libraries in Pennsylvania directly support entrepreneurs, individuals who are self-employed, such as consultants, small businesses, and home-based businesses. Most of the public libraries visited had some resources on starting businesses such as writing business plans, basic accounting techniques, basic budgeting for small businesses, basic management, fundraising, marketing, managing non-profits, and strategic planning. Many libraries had special programs for business people to better inform them of the library's business resources and better equip them for starting or running their businesses. A large range of business endeavors are supported by public libraries, from agrarian pursuits to high-tech start-ups; libraries make a valuable contribution to nearly every type of firm.

A freelance writer uses a branch of the Dauphin County Library System to assist both her own business and her husband's as well as to save money. She offered the following testimonial:

> During the chaos of moving [from California to Pennsylvania] and renovating, I counted on the library's Internet access to give me a clean, quiet place to work. I was able to complete a $1200 research project during that time period for a West Coast client by using the library's Internet access. I would have had difficulty completing the project without use of the library at that time; my home computer was not even unpacked yet.

She continued by stating:

> I have made numerous requests for books through the interlibrary loan service. Several of the books were needed for articles I was working on, but I also needed several to assist me in running my husband's fine art photography business. The books requested were expensive and hard-to-find in stores. By requesting them through interlibrary loan, we saved several hundred dollars in the cost of the books, and were able to find information which saved us at least $2,000. In total, the library saves me several thousand dollars a year in outright costs since I don't have to purchase many expensive reference items and books, and the library helps me earn several thousand dollars a year by giving me access to materials and expertise which help to expand my business. I'd like to add that I was completely surprised by this - one of my concerns about moving to our rather isolated farm was that I would be so far from a major library. I was truly shocked to find that so many of my needs were met by the comparatively small Elizabethville branch, which is only 10 minutes from my home.

The investigators heard numerous testimonials such as this one at virtually all the site visits.

Some individuals directly owed their livelihoods to the public library. Many writers who did not have access to university collections depended on the public library. Some business owners or entrepreneurs depended on the library's computers to type their business plan or to create their business paperwork such as flyers, business cards, letterhead, and signs.

Small business owners use the James V. Brown Public Library as their own company business libraries. One Internet business owner said:

> When I started my business two years ago, I had the computer background, but not the business background…so main resources were SCORE and a lot of visits to the library…I got books on basic accounting to marketing - you name it…when I run into a new business problem…, I know it [a solution to the problem] is here.

Another participant agreed, stating that many years ago, when he first assumed control of his family's business, he didn't know the difference between a debit and a credit and clearly remembers using the James V. Brown library to get the definition of "depreciation." Such information is vital in the administration of small businesses. A local Williamsport banker confirmed that the library is an excellent resource in starting a new business. He related that frequently customers apply for business loans yet do not have a business background. He often suggests that they go to the library and find out how to start a business and run it before applying for a loan. Thus, the library helps reinforce the establishment of solid businesses in the community. This sentiment was borne out by a businesswoman who started a local publication and credits the library: "I used the library to develop my business plan which helped me to obtain financing."

The Ludington Library has provided resources that have helped to start several small businesses in its area. For instance, one business owner directly attributes the library with helping him establish his Internet business; he learned a lot about the Internet at the library and after he decided to start his business, he used the library Internet connection to get his business started. Another patron stated: "I started a business fifteen years ago and relied exclusively on the library to start. My business employs twenty-five people now." Participants at a number of other libraries, especially the Carnegie Library in Pittsburgh credited the public library directly for their success in starting a business.

Finally, the public library provides an inexpensive marketing opportunity for some businesses. In some libraries, artists can exhibit their artwork and writers can give lectures, thereby providing exposure to their creative enterprises. Such efforts provide an important mix of cultural benefits to the community and visibility for start-up entrepreneurs.

Emerging Computer and Information Technology Has Been Simultaneously a Boon and Bane for Public Libraries

Pennsylvania libraries, in general, have been quick to embrace computer and information technology after perceiving the enormous benefit of such resources. In many communities, especially poor or rural communities, libraries can easily provide the only inexpensive access available in the area.

Web, online, CD-Rom, and other technology-based information resources have opened up new worlds of information to patrons and have dramatically expanded the amount and quality of library service provided and increased the speed in which it can be provided. Demand for computer resources in most Pennsylvania libraries studied has outstripped supply and more resources are desperately needed for continuous upgrading and maintenance of technological resources. All libraries would benefit from increased staffing to handle the overwhelming amount of work that technology improvements have precipitated, as well as increased and better training opportunities for library staff.

Beyond simple access to computers, libraries provide tremendous amounts of training to Pennsylvania residents of all ages. Public libraries provide their training in a wide variety of ways that meet virtually every learning style. Many of the libraries studied offered group demonstrations and classes, one-on-one instruction, computer books, and computer training videos. Better yet, library staff were generally available to help patrons with their individual problems as the patrons encountered them. Library staff were eager to share with patrons everything they themselves had learned about computers. Public libraries have proven to be an excellent technology training outlet for masses of Pennsylvania residents.

Access to computers and technology has a myriad of ancillary benefits: having software to develop and type one's resume helps one to obtain a job, having access to health information on the Internet enables one to make more informed health-related decisions, having access to computers and being provided with training helps one keep one's skills up-to-date. Some of the library services noted at the various sites include the following:

- Access to computer applications such as word processors, spreadsheets, and educational software;
- Exposure and access to Internet resources, especially the World Wide Web;
- Training to the public in many learning settings - from large group demonstrations to one-on-one hands-on instruction;
- Providing basic training and exposure to technology for a better trained workforce;
- Providing a baseline education for consumers in their computer purchases and A place for patrons to test software and hardware before they make a computer purchase;
- Training to special groups who may have special learning issues with regard to technology such as seniors and children;
- Providing expert online and database searching for even the computer savvy;
- In the Carnegie Library and others, providing space on the World Wide Web for non-profit and community organizations for a homepage;
- Enabling technology that delivers information resources to the differently-abled such as the deaf and the blind;
- Providing quicker and easier access to specialized information in digital media which sometimes has advantages over print media; and
- Introducing technology to many Pennsylvania residents who have a fear of computers and how to use them.

These are important and significant activities as residents of Pennsylvania move into the global networked environment. Public libraries provide access to high-tech resources to a broad public with a "high human touch" approach. Further, many residents, said the public library was their *only* place to have free access to the Internet and networked information resources.

The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh and its branches provide access to the Internet to many in its service community. One participant stated:

> The literacy issue is a big issue. Libraries are tutoring sites for adult learners, they are tutoring sites for students who do not have another place to go after school. In our region, and perhaps throughout the Commonwealth, there is a widening gap between people with means and people without means, and I think it's critically important that the low income people have access to technology. Because that will be a killer for low income people - for them to get left behind. Libraries in their neighborhood provide computer training, not only the computer itself, but also the training to learn the technology that is going to be essential, and in the long run, that's a huge savings

> for the people of the Commonwealth and also their parents.... This library does a good job of making sure that the computer training of the children involves a caregiver.

Similar comments were made by focus group participants at the other sites visited by the investigators.

A library patron of Ludington Library, who is also a graduate student, eloquently described the role of public libraries in proving access and training on the Internet in the following manner, after reflecting upon his own experiences in using the Internet and in his attempts to help other library patrons:

> We are at a point where some young kids are learning about it [the Internet] in school but there's this universe opening up that so many people know absolutely nothing about and, worse than knowing nothing about it, they're very intimidated. It's not just a matter of information, it's a matter of being supported in hooking into this scary new thing....It's very important [to introduce the community to the Internet] and it takes a lot of time. There's no way around it. It takes a live human and they have to have time to listen to what the person is confused about and help them figure it out and show them how to do something and that's extremely important and probably always will be important. But right now there's such a large number of people out there who the library is going to be their first maybe only introduction and access to the Internet.

But many of the librarians indicated that they were "swamped" with demands for training and use of equipment. One said, "we simply do not have enough trained staff or computing equipment to stay up with the demand from our patrons."

More than just providing access, the library staff helps to increase the utility of computer-based information sources. They provide a value added to the information. A patron from one of the Carnegie Library branches said:

> What I am beginning to see on the Internet is that there is so much information now that if you look up a topic, and if you can't refine the topic, you can take hours trying to get what you want. I have discovered talking to the library professional who is there, in person, has often cut right through all that growing morass that's happening on the Internet. That's one advantage of having a facility with human beings there who are professionals and who can do better than the Internet [search engines] in some ways in refining your search and getting more efficiently at what you want.

In short, the need for trained librarians to work with patrons in this network environment is likely only to *increase* in the immediate future.

Web Access through Public Libraries

The advent of widespread use of the World Wide Web, has dramatically impacted the quality and type of services offered by Pennsylvania public libraries. Pennsylvania public libraries have come to depend on the Web to supplement traditional library services such as reference, as well as to provide new services such as Internet access to worldwide information. The use of the Web in Pennsylvania public libraries have had the following impacts on the public. Web usage has:

- Provided free, public access to the Web as well as providing some free training and troubleshooting;
- Ushered a renewed interest in the library as a community resource;
- Raised the level of expectation that the library patrons have of their libraries and of the library service that they receive (in terms of speed of availability of resources and access to more resources);
- Created new roles for public libraries (e.g. as a non-profit Internet Service Provider in the case of Three Rivers Freenet and as a de facto Web training facility, etc.);
- Improved overall library service by providing access to *global* networked information resources and services;
- Supported a range of educational programming in the state's schools with training and use of resources available on the Web;
- Made local community resources to be known and accesible to the larger state, national, and global environment;
- Served as a link between the people of the state and local/state government officials, resources, and services;
- Promoted the Internet to a sometimes skeptical public and provided initial exposure to the Web to the general public (many of whom, would have little other chance of exposure);
- Increased the value of the Pennsylvania workforce by providing training in basic and advanced computer skills; and
- Increased the competitiveness and effectiveness of individual citizens and local businesses in an increasingly global, information-based economy.

The city of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County have been particularly visionary and aggressive in providing their region with innovative Web-based resources that enhance the well-being of the region's residents. The Electronic Information Network (EIN) and the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh's Three Rivers Freenet are two key resources.

The Electronic Information Network (EIN) has the stated objective to "provide the public libraries in Allegheny County with the hardware, software and telecommunications equipment…The network will consist of 1,100 workstations to be located in libraries throughout the county." The EIN has several, well-defined purposes; the purposes are:

1. Allow public libraries and their patrons to have equitable access to information which educates, informs and entertains;
2. Create a state-of-the-art telecommunications infrastructure that is critical for attracting high-tech businesses and industries;
3. Creates an electronically integrated library system that allows libraries to share their library collections and permits them to access a cost-effective tool for the enhancement of library management; and
4. Allow citizens to access a system that is easy to use, search local library catalogs, search countywide library catalogs, search over 1,000 library catalogs on the Internet, search databases of specialized lists for reference, summaries and complete texts of published work, and to search databases of pictures, maps, graphs and charts.

Two focus group libraries were members of the EIN - the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh and the Mt. Lebanon Public Library.

As an example, the Three Rivers Free-Net (TRFN) is "a community-based computer network designed to provide the Pittsburgh region with free access to local and world-wide information." TRFN is supported by the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh and for the month of April 1998 averaged 49,752 hits per day. It fulfills its mission by offering free Internet access and by serving as an Internet Service Provider for regional non-profit and government agencies. The Free-Net has a listing of all the nearly 600 nonprofit organizations operating in the region. Over 200 of these non-profits have a webpage sponsored by TRFN and the staff reports "connecting" with 377 community groups.

There are many testimonials about the TRFN site. One agency, the Pittsburgh AIDS stated:

> AIDS services are often fragmented, leaving people who are living with HIV infection wondering where to turn. Having[our] website hosted on the TRFN allows us to pool our resources and create links to other agencies, thus broadening the availability of resources. Discrimination still occurs to people with HIV disease. TRFN allows people to get information about HIV and related services anonymously. Information can be requested via email. This saves time, postage costs, and provides confidentiality to those we serve. It's Pittsburgh-based. It's really important for people who live in our region to be able to find local resources [and] It's free!

A school social worker who uses the site offers the following commentary on TRFN:

> You are really to be commended on how nice this Web site has become. I've watched it grow over the last year or more, and I find many uses for it. I have linked to it from my homepage, and refer people to it often. I am a school social worker, and I am so happy that there is a site for social services in this area.

Other librarians around the state mentioned the TRFN as a model of a community service in the new networked environment that they hoped they could use for *their* community.

All of the libraries that participated in the site visits have established a Web presence to some degree. Figure 2-1, Focus Group Library URLs, listed the uniform resource locators of the libraries (or library systems) that participated. Figure 2-2 provides the URLs of other sites that are germane to this study such as TRFN and the EIN.

Figure 2-1
Focus Group Library URLs

Allentown Public Library (Allentown)	http://www.cliu.k12.pa.us/apl.html
Bellwood Antis Public Library (Bellwood)	http://www.altoona.net/uwbc/bapl/bapl.html
Boyertown Community Library (Boyertown)	http://www.mrimage.net/library.html
Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh (Pittsburgh)	http://www.clpgh.org/
East Shore Area Library (Harrisburg) Dauphin County Library System	http://www.ezonline.com/dcls/adcls.html
Free Library of Philadelphia (Philadelphia)	http://www.library.phila.gov/
James V. Brown Library (Williamsport)	http://www.jvbrown.edu/
Ludington Public Library (Bryn Mawr) Lower Merion Library System	http://www.lower-merion.lib.pa.us/Library.asp
Mt. Lebanon Public Library (Pittsburgh)	http://www.clpgh.org/ein/mtleb/
Susquehanna County Historical Society & Free Library (Montrose)	http://www.epix.net/~suspulib/index.htm#main

Figure 2-2
Related Library URLs

Electronic Information Network (Pittsburgh Area)	http://www.clpgh.org/ein/
Three Rivers FREENET (Pittsburgh Area)	http://trfn.clpgh.org/
Dauphin County Library System (Harrisburg Area)	http://www.ezonline.com/dcls/adcls.html
Lower Merion Library System (Philadelphia Area)	http://www.lower-merion.lib.pa.us/Library.asp
Office of Commonwealth Libraries	http://www.cas.psu.edu/docs/pde/lib1.html

Libraries' use of the Web significantly increases the range and extent of resources and services available to the residents of Pennsylvania and results in numerous benefits. These benefits, however, do not come without a price. The site visits found that the Web presence for many of these (and other libraries in the state) resulted from individually dedicated librarians and community volunteers who contributed significant time and effort to developing and maintaining the Website. The study found that many librarians wonder where the funding for maintenance and for the continuous upgrading of Web-based service that the public demands will come. Further, many libraries, particularly smaller libraries and branches are overwhelmed by the tremendous demand for such services.

Library staffs are constantly developing, expanding, and experimenting with Web-based resources and services. Indeed, these library websites often provide yet another community resource that were it not for the library, simply would not be done. As the demand for such Web-based services and resources continues, libraries also have to ration its use for lack of workstations, train users, and troubleshoot the site yet, such services are growing and likely to continue to grow in the future. As one participant commented, "I tell my friends all the time how great it is that I can go to use the library and its services on the Web without even having to leave my house!"

Provide Information

Libraries are, quite naturally, a source of general information on virtually every topic imaginable. The importance of this function cannot be glossed over in the increasingly complex and confusing information-based society of today. Libraries are one of the few institutions in society that have a long history of specializing in organizing and in providing access to information. Libraries provide:

- A confidential and non-judgmental source of information on any topic, many of which can be very personal and highly sensitive in nature;
- Assistance in the research process, especially to those who have never done research before;
- Good tools for research via special collections, the reference collection, and the general collection; and
- Answers to any questions that the public may have through reference service
- Referral to other agencies.

As one person told an investigator, "the library is a resource for the community to use to solve its most difficult problems and to resolve life's worst troubles."

At the Bellwood-Antis Public Library, one patron confided that the library really helped her in a time of personal crisis to the extent that no other public institution would help. This patron was a victim of a physical attack in front of her young children which she promptly reported to the authorities. She followed the procedures that they recommended and was told by a local attorney and by the state police that there was little she could do to protect herself and her family from further harm. She was not satisfied that she had exhausted all of her legal options, so she went to the library and reluctantly confided in a librarian. She was provided with materials on victim's rights and advocacy that outlined the legal procedures that she should follow and how she could get protection from further assault, as well as describing the various stages of emotional aftermath effects from which violence victims suffer. She found information about her rights in the situation that the local attorney and police did not know and was able to obtain protection for herself as well as to facilitate her emotional healing.

The provision of access to healthcare information is a significant impact of the Susquehanna County Historical Society and Free Library because there are only two small hospitals in Susquehanna County. Patrons frequently use the library to understand the diagnoses they receive. There are several anecdotes to support this claim. According to one library employee, "a doctor gives a person a diagnosis, the physicians here at both of these local hospitals are frankly very rushed because they are serving such a large area and the patients come here to find out what their diagnosis means."

One patron related that one of his adult sons had a major illness and faced a new surgical procedure. This patron's wife desperately wanted information about the procedure and went to the library. "The librarian dropped everything and dug out very thorough, very complete information about this particular surgical procedure. I mean, this kind of service is indispensable!" Another patron received a diagnosis from her doctor that she didn't understand that made her fear for her health. The doctor would only explain the diagnosis in the most terse terms. So she went to the library and got complete information about her condition and felt much more comfortable in dealing with it.

A librarian at the Susquehanna Library told of one patron who had an aunt in the hospital with a rare disease. In the hospital, all they could give the patron was three lines from a book describing the disease. None of the doctors and nurses knew anything about the disease. Even the patron's own neurologist did not know about the disease. According to the librarian, "the patron came to the library and found a book on rare diseases that described the disorder and listed organizations to contact. She took the information back to her aunt." In a final anecdote, a patron told how she received a diagnosis from her doctor that frightened her. She described having her children with her when her doctor told her and how frightened and alone she felt. She went straight to the library and got help in researching her condition. The library staff were sympathetic and very helpful to her. By the time she left, she was still scared about her condition, but she could face her children and calm down enough to think clearly. She credits the library staff and resources with helping her to cope in a very difficult juncture in her life.

The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh runs HelpLine, a program funded in part by the United Way, a telephone referral service. Community members who need help can be referred to over 2,500 local non-profit organizations, support groups and other organizations. HelpLine gives referrals for problems such as alcoholism, child abuse, day care, housing, legal issues, rape, counseling, and runaways. In 1997, over 21,000 people called for and received assistance with referrals. A number of other libraries visited provide similar assistance as a link between community services and individual needs.

Support to a Democratic Society and Promote Civic Responsibility

Libraries support the foundational principles to which this society subscribes: they support life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. They also serve more practical democratic and civic ends, for example, at least one library studied serves as a polling place for elections. Libraries distribute tax forms and give space to groups to provide free tax assistance, provide free or inexpensive public meeting spaces, and encourage freedom of speech and ideas. The libraries visited provide:

- Equitable access to expensive information resources such as books, audio-visual materials, and computers;
- Advocacy for the creation and maintenance of a community of lifelong learners – promoting an educated and informed citizenry;
- An educational resource that is open to all citizens regardless of age, level of ability, or economic status;
- Specific information regarding the democratic and political processes in this country and how to use them;
- Information regarding access to elected officials, directions to appropriate government agencies, and how these government agencies (local, state, and federal) might assist residents; and
- A distribution center for a range of significant government information.

These and other related activities are essential for preserving and extending a democratic society.

According to a patron from the Carnegie Library:

> To me the library is one of the foremost democratic institutions. I think it's more democratic than most governments because it is free to the people. Libraries have historically been private preserves or the preserves of the monastery and here we have resources that no human being can own personally and that are available for everyone. You can't get a degree from a library but you can get an education from the library. And it seems to me that the job is not to cut back on the services that the library offers, but to try to make the vision of what the library is a part of public awareness.

Indeed, for a number of participants, the public library serving as a "people's university" and as a means to effective participation in society were important roles.

Public libraries promote equitable access to information resources. A patron of the Free Library of Philadelphia, who works with welfare recipients who are about to become ineligible to receive benefits, offered this view:

> I think the library is an equalizing force in our society. I was thinking about the people that I teach, somehow people make the connection that children should go to the library and read and they readily say that their child has a library card, but then when I say to the adult, 'and when's the last time you've been?' there's no connection there. Every time when I'm teaching and they say what they can't afford it, I tell them, 'It's free. What do you mean you can't afford it? It's in the library.' If someone

> has to do research on anything, even if you can't afford the daily newspaper you can go to the library and read the paper. [The library] can be the force that closes the gap between the haves and the have-nots.

In fact, many of the participants showed concern that some members of society who might need the public library the most, were also the most uninformed about how the library could help them. But as one librarian stated, "we simply cannot mount any more public awareness programs for the community given the responsibilities we already have."

Support to Other Agencies

Libraries provide significant support to community agencies. They help further the missions of these organizations. Indeed, many of the organizations would be less effective and reach far fewer people without the support of the public library. These organizations provide important services to their communities. The kinds of agencies that depend on the cooperation and assistance of the public library include: literacy groups, immigration and refugee service organizations, welfare agencies, adult education groups, tax assistance organizations, job training, small business assistance, and service organizations such as the Rotary Clubs, etc. Libraries provide:

- Free and inexpensive meeting space
- Free office space to some organizations
- Promotion of activities of the agencies
- Referrals to the agencies
- Information resources that support the aims of the agency
- Some training, especially computer training, to some members of the agency.

Of course, services and programs from the library are not free, but many members of the local community perceive them as free. Often, the investigators found that the services provided to other agencies are link-pins that coordinate the local community and significantly increase the success of these agencies.

The delivery of health care information to the public is a formal goal of the Allentown Public Library. A foundation executive confirms the necessity of the library in distributing healthcare information that is in direct support of his agency's mission:

> Our foundation is solely committed to measurably improving the health status of our community. Our public library has proven, year after year, that the hard to reach groups and individuals most in need of good health information can be reached through the library. The pregnant teenager, the Alzheimer's care giver, the diabetic, the poor, young mother, the recovering heart surgery patient all find and use the good health books, videos, and on-line services we fund for the library. This public library

> does what hospitals and doctors have not been able to do - provide a non-threatening environment, convenient public hours, and a broad variety of materials for all levels of skill.

Such statements demonstrate significant impacts that may result to a community in terms of improved health and delivery of health information services.

Immigrant and refugee service agencies in Philadelphia appreciate and use the resources of the Free Library of Philadelphia. A community leader, who is an English-as-a-Second-Language instructor, describes the benefit that the library provides for new residents of the United States:

> The most important benefit for me has been related to my work with refugees. Helping them with their study of English, resume writing, and job search has proven to be very important. The impact has been both economic as well as helping them integrate and understand our society.

This instructor uses the materials of the Workplace Center regularly and believed they are important:

> Workplace has been invaluable in broadening the horizon of students. I can tell them how to look for a job, but when they're able to come here and see for themselves that it's more than looking in a newspaper and how to compete in a job market where they may be at a disadvantage not only because of language but socially and culturally. This is where the benefit has been very great.

Another community leader who uses the Free Library of Philadelphia and who works with refugees states:

> The difference in the refugee population is one of degree of English spoken and lack of awareness of what is available for them. The Workplace provides not so much the computer skills but for our clients who are interested in and motivated for a higher level job search...for instance, we have many engineers and professionals who come over who would like eventually...to get back into their field. They are unaware until they come here of all of the journals and their specific needs that are targeted. The Workplace has been invaluable. I've had students, for example, who came from the former Soviet Union who have found their old technical articles translated and published in American journals. Some of them did not know that this had happened. So they were able to use these articles to help them to do their resume and forward to people in their particular field. Many of our people come from countries where there is no such thing as a lending library.

These services have numerous impacts on individuals that enable them to become productive members of society.

Cradle to Grave Relationship

One of the libraries' aspects of which the librarians interviewed were especially proud, was that they were able to provide "cradle-to-grave" service. Indeed, a number of users commented that they began using the library as a child. The role of the library in their lives began at an early age and continued throughout their lives. One person commented, "the library has always been there for me whenever I needed it -- regardless of the period in my life when I needed it. Now it's there for my children." Libraries in Pennsylvania are one of the most inclusive institutions in communities. Librarians strive to make services and resources available to every individual regardless of age, class, or ability.

Interestingly, a number of the participants interviewed, especially in the smaller more rural communities, saw their growth and development as a person intricately intertwined with the public library. One user commented, "the librarians teach basic values that support our family's values." Moreover, they saw the library as a source to reinforce community and family values and hoped (expected) their children would grow up with such an association with the public library.

Support for Adult Education

The public library is, in many communities in Pennsylvania, a primary source of adult education. In others, the public library is an important supporting institution to other agencies of adult education. Public libraries encourage and support literacy among adults. They strive to create a community of readers and lifelong learners.

On a practical level, libraries provide study books for standardized tests, they usually contain spaces that serve as a quiet environment conducive to study, they exist as a supplement to academic libraries for those who have to work full-time while pursuing a formal education, they provide space for a variety of classes from ESL classes to literacy tutoring, and they provide access to a range of study guides for various types of civil service jobs. Library materials are also available for self-study and improvement.

Aside from serving as a center for independent education, the library supports adults in achieving their formal educational goals. In a letter from a patron who used one of the Dauphin County Library System libraries, the patron outlines the critical role that the public library plays in helping her to reach her goals:

> I am a 22 year old college senior. I am a full time student. I am also employed full time. My schedule is very full [because] I go from school right to work, I am unable to [use] the school library. This [schedule] could pose a quite a problem, but it doesn't. The reason is the assistance I receive from the research staff at the Elizabethville Area Branch Library. When I get a research assignment or a research paper, the first thing I do is call the library and tell them what my topic is and ask

> them for help. Every time they come through, [they] help me narrow my search and point me in the right direction to finding the information I need. Without their help I doubt if I would be able to keep up with my studies and still bring in that valuable pay check. The location saves me from extensive travel and the helpful staff saves me from hours of aggravation. If for a moment you doubt the necessity of a local library or doubt their helpfulness, I stand as a testament to their necessity.

Again, similar testimonials were heard from participants in all the libraries visited. Indeed, some were even more compelling as they described independent learning activities that resulted in obtaining a job, or otherwise advancing one's career.

Another patron who works and who is completing a graduate degree credits the East Shore Area Public Library of the Dauphin County Library System with helping him accomplish his goals:

> I work until five and normally I'm at the library from 5:30 until 9:00. I work full time and go to school full time and the library is just an ideal place for me. I have six classes -- I have papers out the kazoo. Everything I need for them is normally here, the microfiche, the Internet, plus books pretty much suffice my needs. Everybody at East Shore knows me and I know them and I appreciate them...I'm very thankful.

According to staff at the Elizabethville Branch of the Dauphin County Library System, many of their patrons continue their education while working. According to a statement the staff prepared:

> We have many patrons who are continuing their education while working. Most of these patrons have been away from academics for a while, or have never been exposed to the academic world. We are able to help them reawaken their research skills or introduce them to the world of research and information. These patrons are hoping to improve or enhance their job skills so that they can compete in today's job market.

Such contributions from the public library are important benefits to not only the individuals but for the broader community.

On a more practical front, public libraries sometimes enable students to afford college in the first place. A patron of the Free Library of Philadelphia who works with the underprivileged pointed out how libraries enable youths to go to college:

> I am constantly always sending young people here [to the Free Library of Philadelphia]. I do not accept any young person who tells me the only reason they don't go to college is they don't have the money. I don't want to hear it. Go down to the library and start researching scholarships. I've actually brought kids here and shown them how to sit at the computer and do what I call 'grunt work' -- you take the book, and you look. It's there.

> And a young lady just called me the other day, and she had a list [of scholarships that she had applied for] and I tell them no less than thirty and we go through this whole thing about how long it should take and how many trips you have to make to the library, and she called me the other day, and she said that two of the scholarships that she sent off for, she got. Now they're not big, but my attitude is, if you get ten that are a thousand dollars each, then you got ten thousand dollars. Ten thousand is ten thousand whether you get it all in once piece or ten -- one thousand dollar scholarships. So again, for young people or families who say [things] about the whole issue of going to college and affording it, that you have one of the best sources right here in the library.

Providing access to such information that results in scholarship money and other benefits might be considered as income not only to the family, but also the local community.

Source of Inexpensive Leisure Materials

The public library is a source of recreational materials, especially, but not limited to, books. Patrons who use the library a lot really enjoy having access to inexpensive recreational and leisure materials. Library patrons in Pennsylvania desire, demand, and expect the latest best-selling novels, books on tape, educational and recreational videotapes, popular and scholarly magazines and journals, the local newspaper, musical recordings, and books and videos for their children and grandchildren.

The library is a basic, non-threatening, pleasant institution. A librarian of the Lower Merion Library System states: "where else can you walk in to a public setting where you don' t need a driver's license, you don't need a credit card, you don't need ID, you don't have to explain why you're there, you don't have to ask can you sit next to this person...you just walk in and everyone's equal, that's not something you can replace if it were to disappear." Access to and use of such leisure material contributes to the overall quality of life in a community - and its attractiveness as a place to live.

Another user at a more rural library setting commented that there is no Barnes and Noble in the area, no places where you can just browse and have access to not only "fun" reading but also guides to "how to fix your car" or "landscape your garden." He commented that he had completely landscaped his home as a result of materials he checked out at the library and "probably increased the value of my home by $7000 - $10,000."

Support of the Local Culture and Arts

Public libraries provide essential support and encouragement of the arts and of local history. In many locations, the public library is the premier source of local history. In other locations, the local history/genealogy collections in the public libraries are superior to that of historical societies.

The Mt. Lebanon community has great interest in culture, local history, and the arts. Consequently, the Mt. Lebanon Public Library has attempted to provide programs and materials to address these interests. A participant in the business luncheon focus group noted how important popular cultural offerings were:

> I came down to the class on genealogy and using the computer... I came down about a quarter to one and the class began at 1:00 and there were 30 or 40 chairs set up in the meeting room and they said there would be no problem [getting seating] so I ran upstairs and came back - they had to bring more chairs and print more material -- there must have been 60-70 people here, and I kind of laughed when they [the library staff] said genealogy was such a really important part of the library but it really is.

In other libraries, the investigators were told of a number of instances where such programs were "closed out" for lack of meeting space room and other resources – like staff to conduct the programs.

The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh contains an internationally recognized Music and Art Department. The Music and Arts Department consists of an Art Collection that was established in 1930 and includes more than 72,000 books, many videos, and 200 serial titles. The collection contains over 60,000 slides and approximately 240,000 mounted pictures. The music collection is one of the finest public library collections in the United States. The collection consists of over 100,000 books and scores, 40,000 recordings, 300 periodicals and videos, special files, and indexes. One participant commented that were it not for the availability of this collection she would never have been able to complete a number of musical scores that she had written.

Children's Services Have Key Impacts

Public libraries serve children of all ages with a range of "exciting" and innovative" programs and services. Most libraries, even those who offer very little in the way of programming, do offer some children's programming. In general, all ages of children are offered services and resources throughout the state -- from baby lapsit story hours to helping high school seniors conduct research on future careers and the selection of college, Public libraries have something to offer every age and developmental group. And according to the participants in the focus groups, children's programming is critically important to Pennsylvania residents. Citizens, whether they have children of their own or not, are very concerned about the education of Pennsylvania's children. Libraries make specific, unduplicated, and important contributions to the education, socialization, and well-being of Pennsylvania's children. Libraries provide:

- An alternative education resource, as opposed to public schools, where reading and learning for pure enjoyment and self-development is stressed rather than reading for the sake of duty; additionally, the library environment is relatively unstructured and generally non-threatening;

- A free, public source of curriculum support for homeschooling parents and their students; homeschooling is a significant and growing trend in Pennsylvania;
- Support to private and parochial schools that may not be able to provide any substantive school library resources on their own;
- Supplemental library support to public schools whose school library centers may not be sufficiently supported;
- Educational support and access to resources at times when school resources are unavailable to students such as during after school hours, the weekends, and during the summer;
- Educational programming, support, and resources to babies, toddlers, and pre-school aged children in group and individual settings;
- Early experiences that teach responsibility and socialization skills to children;
- *De facto* after school caregivers, providing a haven to the young -- children and parents perceive libraries to be a "safe place" for children to go after school
- Library staff who serve as role models for youths;
- Information resources for children to learn to study independently and to learn about the world around them;
- Books and story hours for daycare centers and home childcare givers; and
- Emphasis on the importance of reading to children in order to encourage reading and literacy at a young age.

These and other impacts directly support the educational development of children throughout the state.

Most public library patrons strongly support the library for their children. As one patron who used the Boyertown Community Library described how important reading was to his family, he offered the following testimony:

> If you can't read, you can't do anything. We moved here from New York and not to be derogatory, but the New York schools are ahead of the Pennsylvania schools in terms of some of the programs they have and their approach to education. But the reading program here at the Boyertown Library is excellent because it gets the kids early. It gets them in here. It gets them interested. My son has a very short attention span. But when he gets to the library his attention span is huge -- he's glued.

Another patron of the Boyertown Community Library who volunteers at the library, reported that:

> The kids come through the door here and it's see ya mom! They come out with armfuls of books; they drop them because they can't carry them all. I remember when I was little and going to the library and it was like, don't touch the books and I was

> afraid. But here it's very open to the children and the children are encouraged to look at books and take books out and read them.

The director of the Boyertown Community Library offered yet another testimonial about the impact of public library services on the young:

> There was a family who had a son who just did not like to read at all. Our summer reading program is very prize-oriented. We have fun. We don't have requirements like you have to read a certain kind of book -- if its not quite on their reading level its okay, they can read comic books, newspapers, just read. READ! This kid said, hey, this is great. I read books and I get prizes.' And then when the summer reading program was over, he was still reading and we weren't giving him prizes. His mom came in and said this was the greatest thing that ever happened to her family.

These are but a sampling of the stories that were told to the investigators about how children services impact lives.

The public library is a critical source for building literacy in pre-school age children. A librarian from Ludington Public Library, said, "storytimes for infant and toddler age children are still largely the domain of libraries -- slightly older children are now being offered storytimes in other places, such as bookstores and toy stores, but no other institution takes responsibility for pre-literacy training and fostering a love of reading in young children."

The utility of the public library in providing critical services to children, cuts across economic lines. Rich and poor children alike benefit from the free services of public libraries in strikingly similar ways. In the very affluent area on the Main Line in Bryn Mawr where Ludington Library is located, many children are brought to storytime by non-parental caregivers such as nannies and au pairs. The librarians report that many of these caregivers are poorly trained to foster early literacy skills in young children so the library consciously assumes the responsibility. A librarian at Ludington Library states:

> One of the thing we're seeing more and more of with the storytime are children being brought in by *au pairs* and other caregivers besides the parents and to some of these children, coming to storytime is their main introduction to books, to many of the songs of childhood because they're spending so much time with caregivers who may or may not do these kinds of things with the children. A lot of them are *au pairs*, or some are just making their living as nannies, and it seems that they have no training [in early childhood education]. I just don't get any impression of it. Some of them are very good and are definitely taking out books to read to the children, but others, you can tell they don't. Our storytimes are practically the only time they [the children] are exposed to this stuff.

As one participant stated, "every morning my toddler asks me if today is library day or not."

The director of the Allentown Public Library points out the role of public libraries in socializing children to function in society. "An aspect of public libraries that is seldom stated and not properly appreciated is the development of socialization skills. My contention is that the public library provides this wonderful opportunity for developing those socialization skills. It's unstructured, but it's where you learn the give and take of social life and responsibility." A patron of the Allentown Public Library, agreed and noted that her daughter learned the practical application of responsibility from the library by having to be responsible for the books that she borrowed as a young child. My husband and I are responsible people and we tried to instill a sense of responsibility in our daughter. The message of responsibility that we tried to communicate vividly came home to her because she was given books, these books were put in her care and she knew that she had to take care of them and she did it."

At the Susquehanna library parents sign up for their children to attend story hour months in advance. Participants in the focus group literally glowed with pride about the quality of these programs -- offering examples of how important these programs were for their children. One librarian commented that they could fill story hour two or three times again if they had the staff and resources to do so. But, she said, "the reality is that we are already spread very thin and simply cannot provide more children's programs despite our desire to do so."

Significance of Pennsylvania Public Library Services

Clearly, Pennsylvania's public libraries have a significant impact on users throughout the state. The incidents and anecdotes reported here are only a few of those reported to the investigators. These incidents focus on the benefits and impacts of library services, but the impact of poorly funded libraries is also painfully clear -- fewer pre-school reading readiness programs, fewer homework resources for school age children, fewer resources for small businesses, fewer computers for fewer children and families. The challenge, of course, is to maximize the impacts from public libraries. Such a strategy will require increased investment in Pennsylvania public libraries. But currently, as reported in the Philadelphia Inquirer series, "Libraries in Distress" (June 1-4, 1997), Pennsylvania public libraries are inadequately funded for providing basic services -- to say nothing of some of the "extra" services such as those described in this chapter.

CRITICAL INCIDENT LOGS

Another source of information describing impacts and benefits from Pennsylvania public libraries are the librarian service desk logs of critical incidents. Logs were kept at the public service desks of selected libraries to record critical incidents -- encounters with the public that resulted in high impact service and high benefit to the patron over a two week period. The purpose of these logs was twofold: to obtain example incidents where librarians believed significant impacts resulted from library services, and to develop a list or typology of the types of impacts resulting from public library services. The method used to gather the data of the critical impact logs is described in Appendix 2-E . Appendix 2-F is the log used to record critical incidents. Appendix 2-G describes the coding process used to analyze the individual critical incidents.

The results are presented in two sections. The first section includes the general results of the content analysis of the critical incident desk logs. The second section consists of selected anecdotes taken directly from the logs themselves that provide insight into the tremendous impact that public libraries provided across the state during this two week period.

Analysis of Desk Logs

The critical incident reports resulted in 401 critical incidents reported, of which there were 493 distinct public library resources or services used in the transactions. Of these 401 critical incidents there were 465 distinct positive impacts/benefits mentioned. The reason that there are more resources used and more benefits/impacts than the number of incidents reported is that for some entries, more than one library resource was used and/or more than one, distinct benefit was noted. For instance, a staff member could report using books in the general collection and the Internet to address an issue where the benefits to the patron were that they saved money and had enjoyment using the materials. The following two tables present the results of the analysis.

Figure 2-3, Analysis of Library Resources Used, lists the library services used and the frequency of responses by category.

FIGURE 2-3
ANALYSIS OF LIBRARY RESOURCES USED

GENERAL RESOURCE CATEGORY	RESOURCE SUB-CATEGORY	LIBRARY SERVICES USED	NUMBER OF RESPONSES FOR THE SERVICE
MATERIALS	General Reference Materials	Adult Reference Materials	90
		Children's Reference Material	6
	General Collection Materials	Adult General Collection	37
		Children's General Collection	29
		Periodicals	23
	Specialized General Collection Materials	Government Documents	12
		Small Business	8
		Personal Finance	9
		"How To"	4

		Medical/Health	12
		Legal	2
		Workplace	8
	Special Collection Materials/Alternate Formats	Audiotapes	2
		Videotapes	13
		Sound Recordings	4
		Genealogy/Local History	22
SERVICES/ PROGRAMS	Outreach Services/Programs	General Outreach	3
		Bookmobile	11
	General Adult Programs/Services	General Reference Service	41
		Reader's Advisory	1
		Interlibrary Loan	20
		Referrals	5
	Children's Services/Programs	Story Hour	7
		Homework Assistance	1
		Special Programming	4
	Computer Classes/Programs	Computer Training (Non-Internet)	2
		WWW/Internet Training	8
	Miscellaneous Services/Programs	Miscellaneous	2
		Library Tours	2
TECHNOLOGY AND PHYSICAL RESOURCES	Technology Resources	Computer Access (Non-Internet)	33
		Email Access	1
		WWW/Internet Access	62
		Other Technological Resources	1
	Physical Plant Resources	Community Rooms/Meeting Space	3
		Quiet and/or Pleasant Environment	5

The library resources that provided the greatest impacts in "critical" public services encounters are the general reference materials, general collection materials, general services, and technology resources. Figure 2-4, Most Frequently Used Library Resources, summarizes these findings. The general reference materials include both adult and children's reference collections, and were responsible for 19% of the library services used in providing solutions of critical impact. The general collection materials which include the adult collection, the children's collection, and periodicals accounts for 18% of the library materials used that helped to serve in the critical incidents. General services which includes general reference and interlibrary loan, provided 13% of the resources that were used to answer the critical issues. Finally, technological resources which include Internet/World Wide Web access and computer application access accounted for 19% of the resources used.

FIGURE 2-4
MOST FREQUENTLY USED LIBRARY RESOURCES

RESOURCE	PERCENT OF TOTAL RESOURCES USED IN CRITICAL INCIDENTS
Reference	19.47%
General Collection	18.05%
General Services	13.59%
Technology Resources	19.67%

Figure 2-5, Analysis of Impacts/Benefits, describes the frequency of benefits or positive impacts from the use of library services and resources.

FIGURE 2-5
ANALYSIS OF IMPACTS/BENEFITS

GENERAL CATEGORY OF BENEFITS/IMPACTS	BENEFITS/IMPACTS	NUMBER OF INCIDNETS
ECONOMIC	Saved Money	11
	Made Money	5
	Improved/Started Small Business	30
	Helped With Consumer Decision	15
	Helped With Corporation	3
SOCIAL	Exercise Civic Duties	2
	Social Networking	1
	Meet New People	2
	Community Development	5
PERSONAL	Enhanced Personal Fulfillment	26
	Provided Relaxation	2
	Happiness/Joy/Enjoyment	26
	Assisted in Making Informed Decisions	5
	Information that Provided "Peace of Mind"	4
	Critical Information	27
	Facilitated Recreational Activity	13
	Enabled Research	11
	Encouraged Love of Reading	9
	Provided General (Non-Critical) Information	10
	Assisted in Reaching a Goal or Completing a Task	35
	Helped Family/Friends	3
	Helped Manage Personal Finances	13
MEDICAL/LEGAL	Medical	24

	Legal	8
EDUCATIONAL	Improved Literacy	4
	Helped in Primary/Secondary Education	26
	Helped with Formal Post-Secondary	12
	Helped With Graduate/Professional Education	3
	Facilitated Lifelong Learning	8
	Gained/Improved Computer Skills	12
	Helped Plan for College	10
	ESL	2
VOCATIONAL OR PROFESSIONAL	Helped Perform Job Better	47
	Helped Obtain Job or Job Lead	43
	Helped With Career Decisions	6
MISCELLANEOUS	Other Miscellaneous Benefits	2

Of all of the impacts of the critical incidents reported, there were significant benefits in nearly every category. Figure 2-6, Greatest Impacts of Critical Incidents, presents these findings. In the "Economic" category, the greatest number of impacts, 6%, were that library resources helped the patron to run or start a small business or home-based business. In the "Personal" category, 5% of the total impacts were from library resources that provided increased personal fulfillment, another 5% of benefits came from an increased happiness or joy from use of library resources, and 7% of the impacts came from patrons using the library in order to accomplish a task or reach a goal.

FIGURE 2-6
GREATEST IMPACTS OF CRITICAL INCIDENTS

IMPACT/BENEFIT	PERCENT OF INCIDENTS REPORTING IMPACT
Helped Patron With Their Job/Perform Job Better	10.11%
Helped Patron in Job Search	9.25%
Helped Patron Accomplish a Task or Reach a Goal	7.53%
Helped Patron Run or Start a Small Business	6.45%
Provide Access to Critical Information	5.81%
Helped Primary/Secondary Education	5.59%
Enhanced Personal Fulfillment	5.59%
Source of Happiness/Joy	5.59%
Helped Patron Understand Medical Condition/Diagnosis	5.16%

Of the "Educational" category of impacts, the greatest impacts came from using library resources in helping students with their primary/secondary education. There were two chief impacts from the "Vocational/Professional" category of impacts: 10% of the impacts resulted from patrons using the library to help them with their jobs and 9% of the total impacts of library resources helped patrons in their job search. Finally, from the "Medical/Legal" category of impacts, 5% of the overall impacts were from helping patrons to understand their medical condition or diagnosis.

Desk Log Anecdotes

The desk logs yielded a rich source of anecdotal evidence that attests to the broad and vast impact of public libraries on Pennsylvania residents at critical junctures in their lives. The most insightful anecdotes have been selected and are presented here in the words used to report them. The anecdotes have been organized into the following impact themes:

- Impacts of critical information;
- Local history/genealogy benefits;
- Educational benefits;
- Economic benefits;
- Medical/legal impacts;
- Vocational benefits;
- Technological impacts;
- Benefits from pleasant environment;
- Socialization/networking benefits; and
- Impacts on the hard-to-serve.

When taken together, these incidents present a powerful statement of impacts that resulted from public library services during this two week period in February, 1998.

Impacts of Critical Information

Public libraries are resources for information that is impossible or difficult to obtain through other means. Access to these sometimes incremental yet critical bits of information can dramatically improve a patron's quality of life or even have a transformative effect forever changing his/her life.

Many times access to critical information simply makes one's life easier. For instance,

> A patron at the Coyle Free Library needed the name of a furnace manufacturer who took over A & E in Schuylkill Haven, PA. The patron needed to get parts for a furnace that was no longer being manufactured. The parts for the furnace were supposed to be available for ten years after its manufacture was discontinued. The ten year mark was almost over and the patron was happy to get the name of the company responsible for maintaining his furnace parts.

As stated earlier, public libraries provide information and access to information that is difficult for many individuals to obtain.

> A mother helped her daughter look for an apartment in Baltimore using the Internet connection at the Bucks County Free Library. The Internet providing listings with floor plans. The patron declared that the library "saved her many long distance phone calls and possibly even a trip to Baltimore."

Frequently, the critical information is personal and of a very serious nature. Being able to access this information easily is a tremendous impact. For example,

- A father used Lancaster County's Elizabethtown Public Library to research a cult in which his daughter and her family were involved. This man used the information to confirm his decision to rewrite his will so that the cult does not receive any of his money upon his death.
- A patron, who was "investigating the effects of a contaminated water supply in the local community," used the Norristown Public Library of Montgomery County to gather "information on hazardous chemicals including medical responses and long-term effects…This information will allow her to pursue this problem with local physicians and with state authorities.
- A patron used the Beaver Area Memorial Library of Beaver County to get "information on how to put a person in a long-term care facility." [The patron] wanted addresses as well as support material. He left with two books and titles…in case he wanted more support material. Now he has addresses of nursing homes as well as materials to help cope with the situation emotionally. He was very relieved for the help. He said our help would make a difficult situation less difficult.

Local History/Genealogy Benefits

Public libraries in many areas are the sole purveyors of local history and local genealogy. In many instances, public libraries provide the only historical record available about an individual or a place.

- Staff members of the Osterhout Free Library state that "patrons needed information on Elizabeth Sharpe, the last owner of a plantation in Virginia that is now part of the National Trust. The organization had no information on her. She was from the Wilkes-Barre area." The staff member reports that she "was able to provide an obituary of her and her father."

- There was a genealogist who used the local newspaper on microfilm that dated back to the 1700's at the Tamaqua Public Library of Schuylkill County. Without this library's resources, this individual "would not have been able to get the same information anywhere else."

- At the Hazelton Area Public Library, a patron used the local history collection including the city directory collection and newspaper microfilms to obtain critical information. These resources were the "only records available to establish birth/death dates to apply for social security benefits."

Educational Benefits

Pennsylvanians use public libraries to help them to achieve their educational goals and those that they have for their children. They are valuable educational institutions conveniently located within communities and neighborhoods and open to all. Many educators use public libraries to supplement the resources of their employing institution.

- A patron of the Priestley-Forsyth Memorial Library reports the following: "Teaching at a juvenile detention facility with extremely limited library space, I use my public library three to four times a week to supplement and enhance my reading and language arts programs for the students. I am able to borrow pleasure reading, reference, job search and post-high school training materials. This library has enriched the lives of my students."

- A high school student used the Wilkinsburg Public Library of Allegheny County to help locate materials and type a paper. According to the staff, "the student's graduation hinged on her senior paper; she was shaky with research and word processing." Later, the student reported receiving a passing grade.

- A library patron using the Shaler North Hills Library of Allegheny County "asked for books to teach her child to read." This patron finally admitted that she could not read and the books were for her. The patron chose several books from the adult literacy collection. She also took phone numbers to contact a literacy agency for tutoring.

- The Myersdale Public Library promotes local history and community pride. The following anecdotes were prepared by a staff member of the library: "Mrs. W. came in to drop off a book about publishing literature for children. She is a local romance writer who recently helped us to create and produce a children's program with an accompanying book that took the young people through various traditional crafts and domestic tasks of this region in the 19th century. Several people suggested that we look into publishing the package. We may well do this; currently I am happy to simply offer the children a look at their area's past. Our library has a research facility for local history and genealogy that is frequented by

> people from across the United States. We are committed to helping our young people to understand why an economically depressed rural region such as ours has so much to be proud, and a past as dynamic and compelling as that of any region."

Economic Benefits

Pennsylvanians depend on public libraries to support their entrepreneurial goals and their businesses. Patrons have used the library to help start their businesses, to improve their businesses, and to expand their businesses. For instance,

> A patron of the Tredyffrin Public Library notes that it has become his "home office." According to this patron, the library is "the best business bargain in America" and that its numerous services are available "all for the price of a library card."

Many patrons have used the library to help start their own businesses.

> The staff of the Priestley-Forsyth Memorial Library in Northumberland reported that "patrons have used our business section to start their own small businesses. Ones that we know include: a restaurant, two herb businesses, one flower and plant business, one candle business (they first borrowed our candlemaking books, then the business books!) a daycare, and several word processing and computer businesses."

Patrons use the library's resources to improve their businesses.

- A patron at the Monessen Public Library who is identified as an entrepreneur, used the library computers to create flyers for a catering business. This patrons credits the library with the "ability to obtain help in utilizing state-of-the-art equipment including a laser printer and computer software to obtain professional results at minimal cost."

- The head of reference of the Lancaster County Library "lectured to an adult class of twenty-plus about business resources available at the library that they, as budding small business entrepreneurs, could use to develop a business plan. None of the students had ever written a business plan and had no idea how to do so. Several already had shoestring businesses going, but needed this information to go full time with their business. Previous students [of the class] have businesses now."

- A local business used the Hazleton Area Public Library's collection of government documents such as the Federal Register and Code of Federal Regulations to obtain some new health care regulations. According to the staff, the library's collection provided the "only local source that enabled the local health care provider to comply with the new regulations."

Public libraries support outside ventures that economically benefit their communities:

> The Easton Public Library provided periodicals, fashion, and architecture books to the film crew of the movie *Florentine* who were shooting the movie in the area. A library staff member reported, "the crew of this movie searched our collection for pictures of costumes, hairstyles and architecture from the 1960 era to film an upcoming motion picture. Materials used helped authenticate the era in which this film takes place. This motion picture production was an economic enterprise that benefited our city."

Many Pennsylvania residents depend on the library to provide access to investment information.

> A staff member of the Bucks County Free Library reported of a patron who used library resources to determine whether an investment letter that he received from Nigeria was legitimate. He checked up on the offer by using the Internet and found out that it was not. The patron said "we saved him from losing a lot of money."

Some patrons use the public library to save them money in reaching their goals and to even help earn money.

> A patron at the Oil City Library of Venango County used their library's resources to help improve her home. The patron found that building costs for a garage "were out of line with her budget." She used library resources to find out how to do concrete work; these "books helped her husband learn how to lay cement blocks…[They] also gutted and remodeled a home that they bought for $5,000. [The] library [also] helped with information on [installing] dry wall and the house they improved sold for $48,900."

To many Pennsylvania residents, the public library is instrumental in conducting a job search and in producing necessary employment materials such as resumes and cover letters. As an example, a recent college graduate used the Internet at the Memorial Library of Nazareth and Vicinity of Northampton County over a one-month period to look for a job. This patron found his/her first job after college through use of the library's Internet connection after failing to get a job through the use of the Career Development Office on campus.

Medical/Legal Information

Public libraries provide empowering information and solace to individuals coping with serious health and legal issues. Cancer, AIDS, mental illness and other disorders usher in personal crisis, and libraries provide information that empowers the victims and their families to cope with illness, to understand illness, and to make informed and reasonable decisions about treatments. Public libraries also are key information resources for legal information that enable their patrons to protect their rights.

The public library is a wealth of information on medical conditions.

- A patron of the Osterhout Free Library "had the name of a condition her doctor diagnosed and she wanted some information. She did not have the correct spelling of the condition." The librarian "was able to see how her condition was treated, the side-effects and what the prognosis was. She went away feeling better."

- A patron used the Myersdale Public Library for medical information. The librarian wrote: "I met Mrs. B. in her 14th week of a difficult pregnancy, the stage at which she had miscarried during two earlier pregnancies, from a strep B infection, according to her doctor. Mrs. B questioned the diagnosis, however, based on information she had received from the national research association concerned with the infection. Her doctor was brusque and unsympathetic to her questions. We were able to provide her with further research which somewhat curbed her fears that this pregnancy would end for the same reason. In our discussion she revealed that she had also suffered from depression, particulariy difficult considering her religious and cultural background. I supplied her with information on women and depression, particularly in relation to pregnancy; we discussed issues that would likely not have been brought up in her family."

- A physician referred a patron to the Bradford County Public Library to obtain information on schizophrenia. The patron reported that after locating the information at the library, his/her anxiety was eased.

- A patron used the Welsh Road Branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia to gather some medical information; this patron "was expecting a relative with schizophrenia and wanted to know about the disorder." After obtaining the information, the patron "had a better understanding of how to deal with his visitor."

- A patron of the Elizabethville Branch of the Dauphin County Library System used the medical resources to find information about her daughter's illness. She stated, "I was able to finally understand the words that the doctors were using and I then was able to understand what was happening."

- A patron used the Beaver Area Memorial Library to determine the "pros and cons of hysterectomies and the effect of hormones on the body." After getting the information, the patron "felt much better prepared to make a decision on whether she should have an operation."

- A patron used the Welsh Road Branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia to obtain the name of a hand surgeon; the patron hopes to regain control of his/her hands.

Sometimes the provision of medical information has implications for public health issues in the community. Public libraries can effectively contribute towards improving the public health and safety of their communities:

> A patron of the Myersdale Public Library received the benefits of public library use as described in the following that was prepared by the library staff, "Mrs. C. came in with plans for a benefit for one of our patrons, who suffers with leukemia and needs a bone marrow transplant. Lately we have been acquiring and supplying an inordinate number of books and information to patrons for various cancers (as well as numerous other diseases, medical information is one of our major focuses and we work closely with a local hospital librarian to answer questions accurately). Both Mrs. C and myself had noted the seemingly high incidence of cancer in our area and she was concerned because the local staff of the American Cancer Society had noted the same thing. I contacted their office and asked for a breakdown of cancer types and mortality rates by area for our county, and spoke to another friend of the library who is a healthcare professional about helping to take a look at these statistics and various concerns."

Public libraries contain an arsenal of information for patrons to use to win claims against insurance companies and health maintenance organizations who do not want to cover their clients' illnesses. For example,

- A lawyer used the St. Mary's Public Library to verify the status of a client's cancer diagnosis so that he could argue to have the insurance company of his client cover his client's symptoms under his client's policy.

- Another patron used the Elizabethtown Public Library of Lancaster County to perform research on environmental allergies. In her library use, this woman found "significant facts" that she planned to take to her doctor to "challenge the HMO which had been denying her payment for treatment."

Public libraries help patrons to cope with death. The following anecdote was provided by the staff of the Myersdale Public Library:

> The sudden death of her first grader had left Mrs. M devastated, particularly as the doctors had so little explanation to offer her; her little girl had died suddenly in an emergency room, ill with one of the most common of childhood diseases. A...search was requested and revealed that emergency rooms across the country were only recently discovering a connection between two individually benign ailments: chicken pox and strep throat; for a small child the combination of the two could prove to be

> deadly. Mrs. M's daughter had just recovered from one when she came down with the second. The explanation certainly was no comfort to Mrs. M, but it at least [helped] answer the haunting question of "why?"

Pennsylvania residents use library resources in their legal advocacy efforts and to defend their rights:

- A patron reported that s/he used the Hazleton Area Public Library to research the "lemon laws" and eventually got a new car; before using the library legal resources, the patron had no luck in getting an automobile dealer to fix the problems with his/her new car.

- Another patron of the Hazleton Area Public Library used the Pennsylvania Code to obtain up-to-date regulations of the Public Utilities Commission and credited the library as being the "only local source of that information." The patron needed the information to challenge a decision made by the Public Utilities Commission.

- A patron of the Beaver Area Memorial Library needed "material to prove the innocence of a person accused of arson. This person was accused of using kerosene to start a fire, but no trace of kerosene was found on her clothes or hands. [This patron] found several pieces of information to piece together [a defense] to be used at court trial. She also got addresses which would be useful in the process."

- A patron who was being sued by a UPS delivery man was sent to the Norristown Public Library by his lawyer to get weather information. This patron "saved money on his lawyer's fee [by obtaining] pictures and information on weather conditions that will help his legal case."

One of the persistent jobs that public libraries have is the distribution of state and federal income tax forms. This role is especially significant in remote areas.

> The Hazleton Area Public Library is a major distributor for tax forms in the area. According to the staff there, the library is the only local source for federal tax forms and they have distributed more than 3,000 copies of Form 1040 alone during the tax season.

Resources of public libraries can help individuals gain awards from government agencies and through the legal process.

- A patron at the Bradford County Library used the reference resources and found that she was entitled to a wealth of benefits through the Veteran's Administration of which she was previously unaware. She is currently waiting to receive those benefits.

- A patron made extensive use of the county probate files, obituary indexes, and newspaper obituaries of the Centre County Library and Historical Museum to "show the line of descent from a land owner. Our library files were primarily responsible for winning a land trial involving land valued above $180,000."

These are important impacts that provide direct assistance to residents that otherwise would not be available.

Vocational Benefits

Various materials readily available at public libraries enable people to become more valuable employees - and more valuable employees create a better workforce. The resources available at public libraries also enable individuals to simply perform their jobs. A patron at the Chester County Public Library used a book and tape set for mastering the Spanish language. The patron states, "I improved my Spanish with this excellent resource. I could have never afforded to buy it. It improves my ability to function as an ESL tutor, in this country as well as in Latin America (...I spend part of every year there)."

The public library is a key resource for the unemployed who are seeking employment. A patron of the Priestley-Forsyth Memorial Library reports how the library helped to survive a period of unemployment: "The library was a lifesaver for me during a period of unemployment in 1994-95. Not only did I use the library for job search skills and research, I used it for mental relief from the concern and stress of unemployment."

Impacts Related to Technology

Public libraries provide high impact for technological access -- particularly computer access and the World Wide Web -- and training on these resources.

> A patron of the Priestley-Forsyth Memorial Library reports that the library has assisted community technology development efforts. The patron writes: "This library and its very dedicated staff has contributed to our community technology development and the growth of adult and students alike in these areas. Priestley-Forsyth Memorial Library is always there for our students and to provide research, staff, and facilities for our community. The library is one of the strongest partners that we have in developing our community technology resource."

For a number of patrons, where it not for the public library they would have no access to the Internet, Web-based resources, or training in how to use these tools.

A Peaceful Haven - Environmental Impacts

The library is a haven for many. The physical space of many libraries is therapeutic and relaxing for some patrons. A patron at the Tredyffrin Public Library considers the physical space of the library to be a haven -- "I have a place to feel safe from the outside world, where I can catch up on my favorite magazines without spending a dime on them."

Socializing Location/Networking Benefits

Public libraries are wonderful places to socialize, to network, and to engage with the community and the outside world. The library can bring the community together.

> The staff of the Priestley-Forsyth Memorial Library report of "a young family who moved to our area a few years ago [who] said the library helped them to get to know the community and provided them with an opportunity to meet people. One of their children attended our preschool storytimes, so the mother was able to meet other mothers."

Libraries bring families together. People use the library as a starting point to initiate a search for lost family members and friends.

- A patron who lived out-of-state used the Cambria County Library to locate the son that she had given up at birth. She reported to the staff, after reuniting with him, that her son and his adoptive parents were happy.

- A patron of the Osterhout Free Library had not seen nor heard from his brother in ten years and wanted to find him. The patron found a listing for his brother using an Internet website.

Finally, public library programs can offer solace to the hurting soul.

> A staff member of the Centre County Library and Historical Museum reported that a "child whose parents had recently separated and who had been terribly sad smiled and laughed for the first time in some time" during a story hour. The story hour "brought the child some joy s/he had not experienced for a while."

Service to the Hard-to-Serve

The public library as an institution attempts to reach every individual with some service.

- The bookmobile service of the Franklin County Library System provides access to books to the hard-to-serve such as a mother who brings her handicapped child to the bookmobile to pick out books. According to the library staff member, "with a large group the son gets very hyper and nervous. The mother has stated her son would not be able to get books without the bookmobile service." The same bookmobile delivers puzzles and books to a resident group home whose residents have no transportation. According to the bookmobile staff, the residents always look forward to the bookmobile's arrival and walk to the edge of their town to look for the bookmobile, waiting for its arrival.

- A shut-in patron uses and appreciates the outreach services of the New Castle Public Library of Lawrence County; she states, "illness prevents me from leaving my home. Delivery of books is a sanity saver and helps keep me in touch with the outside world."

Such services can be difficult to quantify in terms of dollars or value. But for many of the individuals who "told their story," no dollar amount could be given to the impacts that resulted from public library services.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Throughout the two sets of findings reported in this chapter, it is readily apparent that many Pennsylvania residents demonstrated strong, long-standing and unwavering support of their library. Many of those who participated were very enthusiastic and supportive of their public library, yet had a difficult time articulating the exact benefits that they received. Most patrons could easily describe what resources they used or what incremental bits of information they gathered but were frequently unwilling or unable to convey the long-term implications of the information, services, and access to knowledge provided by the library. Many patrons were understandably unable to impart the depth of impact because many of these impacts were very personal. Others were aware that they used the library, but took for granted the services and benefits they received.

The findings from the site visits and logs paint a picture of Pennsylvania public libraries providing a range of important impacts on communities and users that many people do not recognize in their totality. These successful programs and services result from innovative uses of limited resources -- often as a result of dedicated library staff providing 50-55 hours of work per week. Indeed, to some extent, public libraries in Pennsylvania provide direct subsidies to other organizations in the local community that save many organizations significant resources and staff time. To a large degree the range of impacts that result from public library services and resources are not recognized by the community, nor are the costs associated with providing these services recognized.

Nevertheless, Pennsylvania public libraries provide immeasurable benefit to the public. The libraries have vastly improved the material, social, and cultural quality of life of individuals, have enabled the growth of business and commerce, have educated the young, have raised the level of technological competence of the workforce, have entertained, have stabilized neighborhoods, have sparked the intellect, have empowered, and have enabled citizens to become self-sufficient, self-actualized, and fulfilled. In an increasingly information-based, knowledge-based society, their importance will only increase. In essence, Pennsylvania public libraries are a catalyst that bring out the best in Pennsylvania residents, resulting in a better Commonwealth.

CHAPTER 3:
USER SURVEY RESULTS

To assess the use of public library services and the impact of those services on library patrons, the consultants conducted an in-library user survey during the week of March 9, 1998. The objectives of the user survey were to:

- Get a sense of who was using public libraries during a typical week;
- Determine what types of library services patrons used most during a typical week; and
- Determine the impact, particularly economic, of library services on library patrons.

With these data, it is possible to develop a picture of typical library users, uses, and benefits of library services.

METHODOLOGY

The consultants developed a user survey for distribution to all 625 Pennsylvania public library outlets (see Appendix 3-A for a copy of the survey). Staff members of the Office of Commonwealth Libraries, District Library Consultants, and public librarians pre-tested and provided suggestions for change to the initial survey instrument. Based on the recommendations from the pre-test, the consultants modified the survey instrument and distributed it for final comment.

Each of the 625 Pennsylvania public library outlets received 30 copies of the user survey for completion between March 9, 1998 and March 15, 1998. During this one-week period, libraries were asked to get up to 30 patrons to complete the surveys or return as many completed surveys that they had, whichever came first (see Appendix 3-B for a copy of the survey instructions).

In all, 18,750 survey forms were sent to the 625 outlets (see Figure 3-1). Of those, libraries returned 13,653 completed survey forms for a 72.8% response rate. A total of 498 outlets participated in the survey, for a 79.7% participation rate (Note: During the time of the user survey, some outlets could not participate due to library renovation closures). On average, each library outlet returned 27.4 surveys.

Figure 3-1. User Survey Rates of Return/Participation.

	Total Participating/Distributed	Actual Participation/Return
Library outlets	625	498 (79.7%)
Survey forms	18,750	13,653 (72.8%)
Counties	67	66 (98.5%)
Urban libraries	103 (16.5%)	65 (13.1%)
Suburban libraries	211 (33.8%)	175 (35.1%)
Rural libraries	311 (49.8%)	258 (51.7%)

Prior to distributing the survey, the consultants worked with Office of Commonwealth Libraries staff and the district library consultants to designate library outlet urban/suburban/rural status. Using a combination of census data and staff district library consultant knowledge, each library outlet received an Urban, Suburban, or Rural designation. This allowed the consultants to analyze the data by the geographic status of public library outlets. As Figure 3-1 demonstrates, the survey achieved a representative percentage of surveys from urban, suburban, and rural libraries.

Limitations of Data

The investigators took numerous precautions to ensure the collection of valid, reliable, and representative user data as detailed in Babbie (1996) and Creswell (1994). The findings from the user survey, however, do have limitations about which readers should be aware. These limitations include:

- **Survey method implications**. While all Pennsylvania public libraries participated in the survey, there are discrepancies in library size, hours of operation, and staffing. Thus, for some libraries, the number of surveys completed can limit the ability of those surveys to reflect the library's uses by patrons.

- **Completion of surveys**. The investigators relied on the participating library staff to have patrons complete the surveys. As such, the investigators did not have control over the time of day/day of week libraries distributed the surveys to patrons. It is unclear as to whether the surveys reflect a time of day/day of week bias.

- **Generalizability of the data**. As the figures in Figure 3-1 suggest, the user surveys are representative of urban, suburban, and rural public libraries across the state. Without knowing, in detail, Pennsylvania library patron demographics, the investigators cannot express the extent to which the user surveys are representative of all Pennsylvania public library patrons.

- **Other library factors**. During the user survey, several public libraries could not participate due to closures, renovations, and other factors.

Given these limitations, it is best to view the user survey data as indicators of public library impacts and benefits to library patrons.

FINDINGS

This next section presents findings from the user survey. The analysis is selective, as it does not include all possible types of analysis of all the user survey questions.

User Demographics

A majority of library patrons are female (71.5%) homemakers (25.2%) (see Figures 3-2 and 3-3). Other user groups include retirees (24.4%), students (13.1%), professionals (9.3%), and business persons (9.0%) (see Figure 3-3).

Patron ages range from under 18 to over 65, with a majority of users being between 35 and 44 (25.7%) (see Figure 3-4). The next largest range of users is between 45 and 54 (17.5%), followed by over 65 (17.3%), 26-34 (13.1%), 55-64 (11.0%), under 18 (9.0%), and 18-25 (6.6%). [Note: the survey gathered library usage data primarily from adult patrons].

A large percentage of users – 27.2% – have their high school degree, followed by 22.9% with a college degree, 19.0% with some college, 12.1% with a graduate degree, 10.8% without a high school diploma (Note: This is likely due to the percentage of under 18 year olds shown in Figure 3-4), 6.0% with a community college degree, and 2.1% with a professional degree (e.g., law, medicine) (see Figure 3-5).

Figure 3-2. Library User Gender.

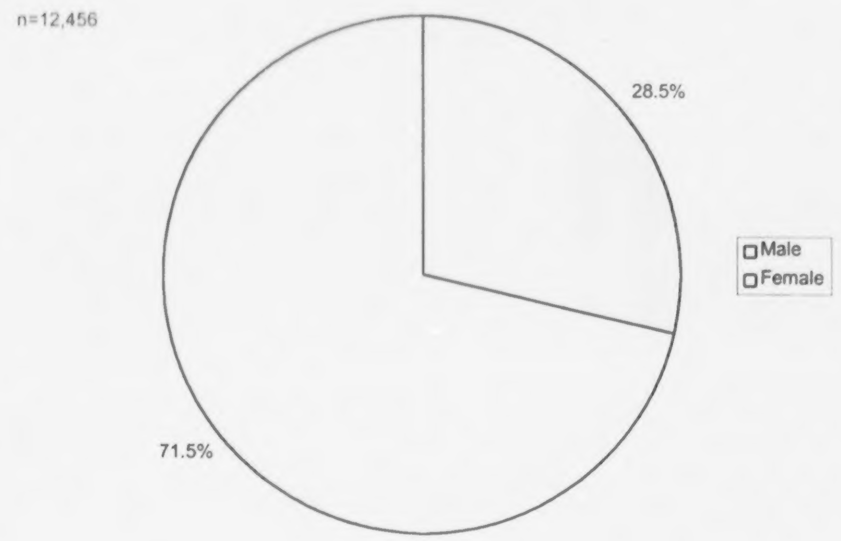


Figure 3-3. Top Five Library User Professions.

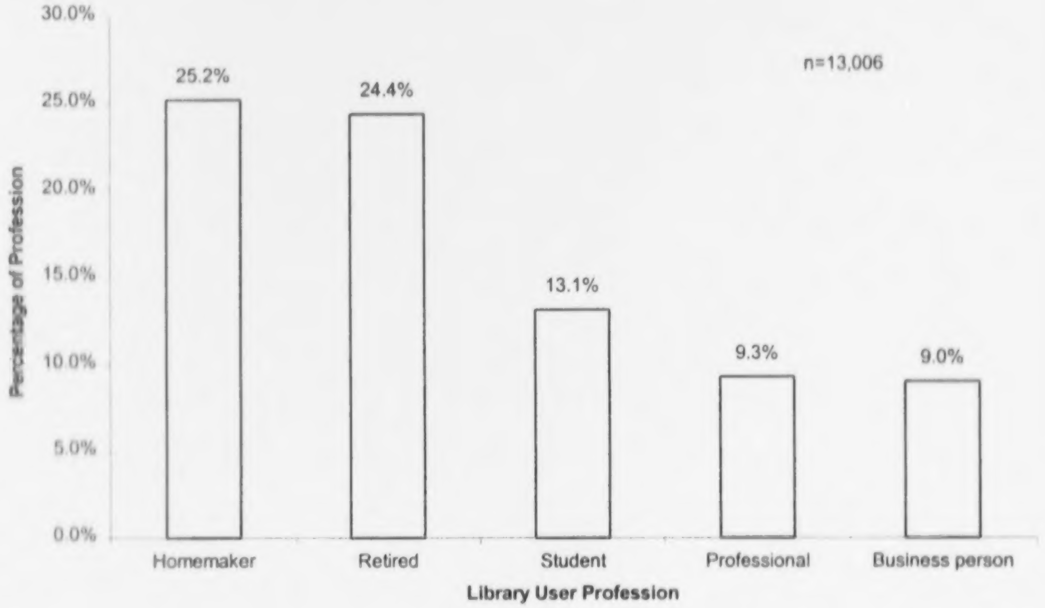


Figure 3-4. Age of Library Users.

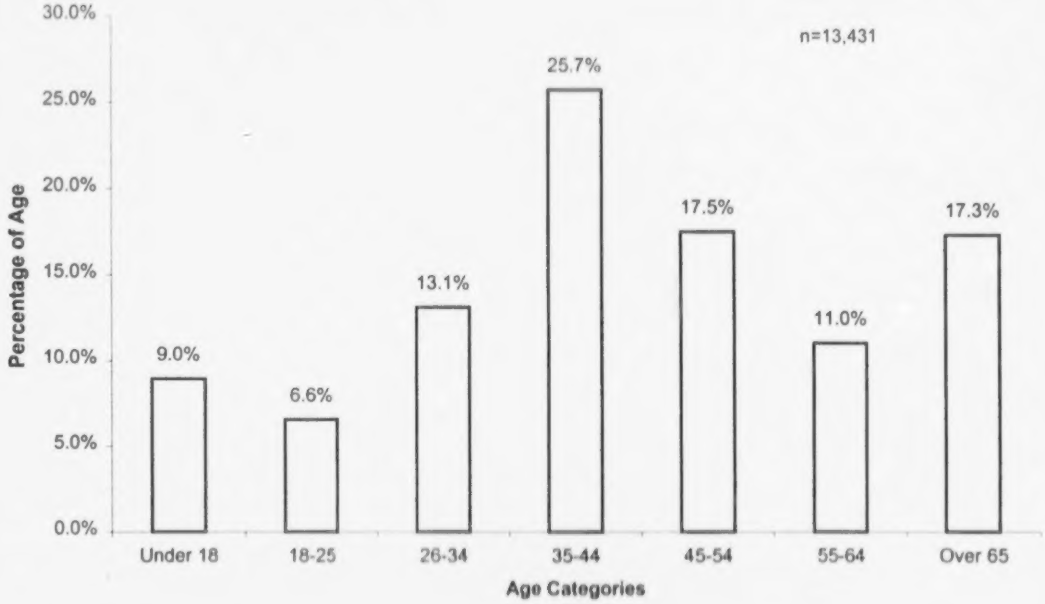


Figure 3-5. Highest Level of Education of Library Users.

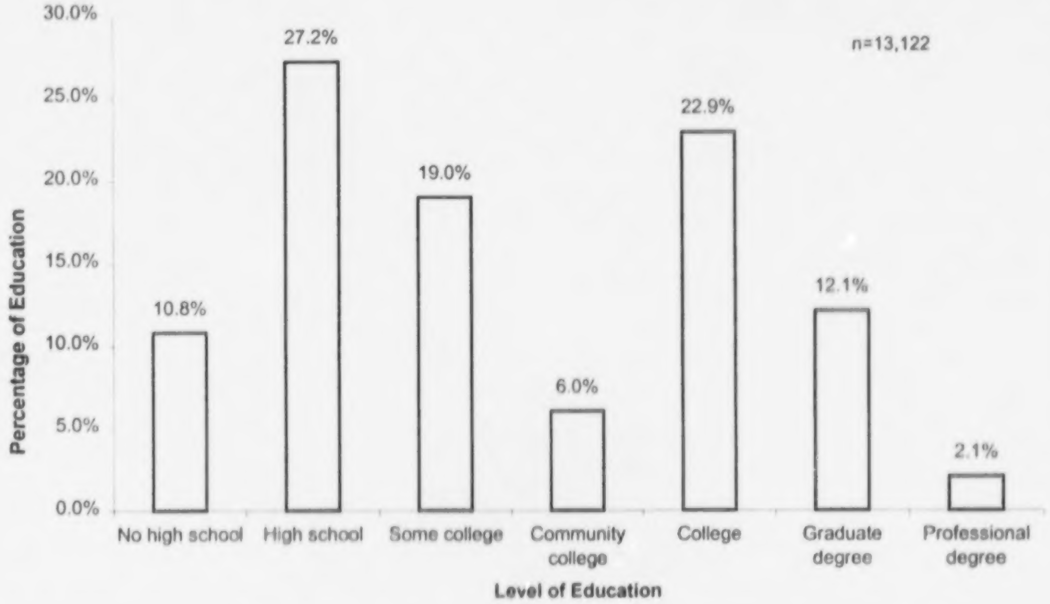
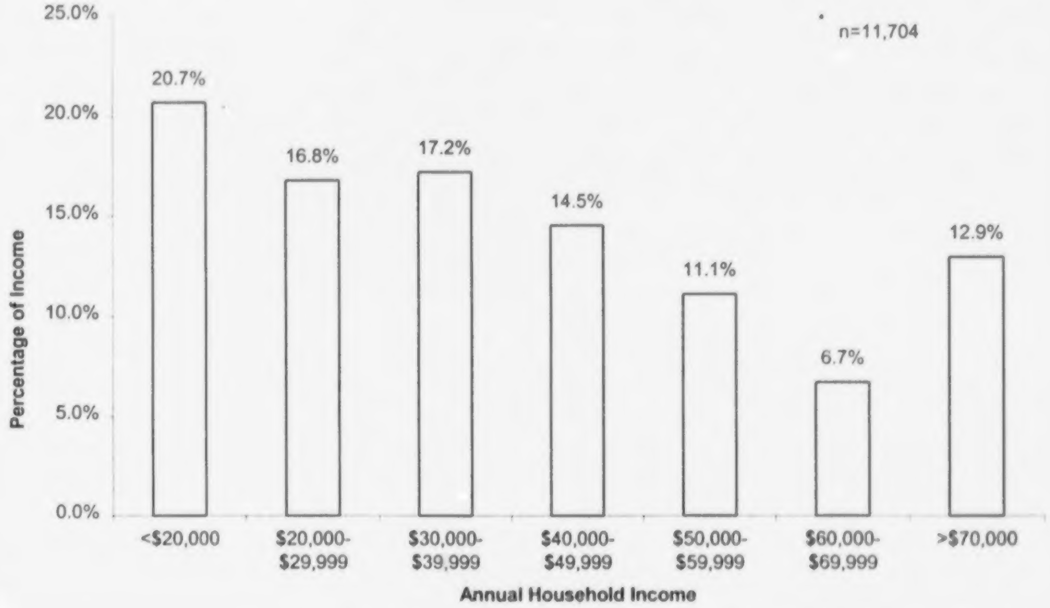


Figure 3-6. Annual Household Income of Library Users.

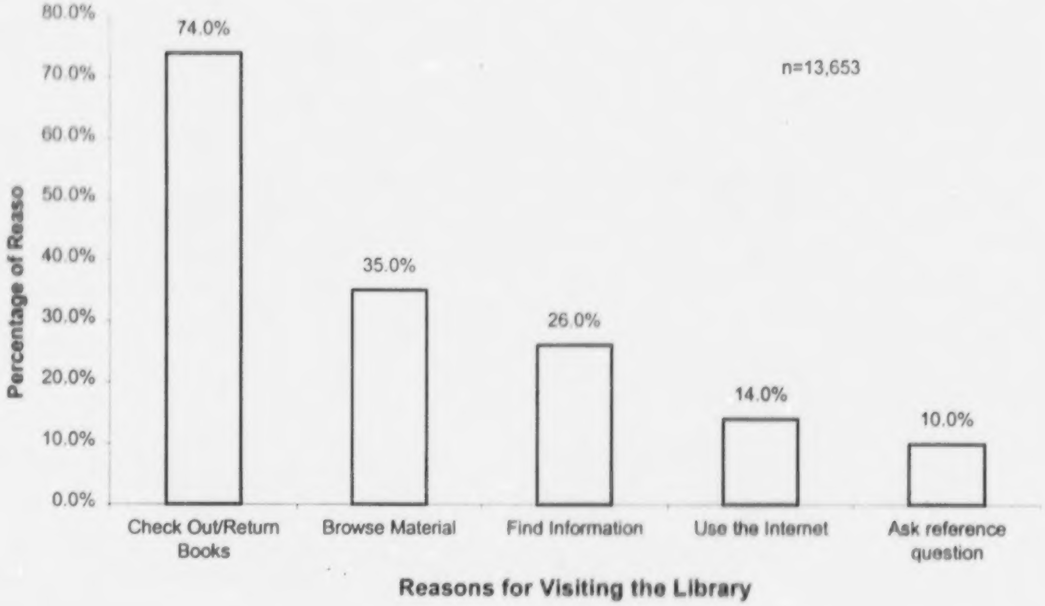


Overall, 20.7% of library users report annual household income levels of below $20,000, followed by 17.2% with incomes between $30,000 and $39,999, 16.8% with incomes between $20,000 and 29,999, 14.5% with incomes between $40,000 and $49,999, 12.9% with incomes of over $70,000, 11.1% with incomes between $50,000 and $59,999, and 6.7% with incomes between $60,000 and $69,999 (see Figure 3-6).

Reasons for Visiting the Library

Overall, patrons identified numerous reasons for their visit to the library (see Figure 3-7). These reasons included checking out/returning books (74.0%), browsing library material (35.0%), finding specific information (26.0%), using the Internet (14.0%), and asking reference questions (10.0%). Based on the responses, it is clear that patrons come to the public library to perform several tasks during a single visit – e.g., checking out/returning a book and asking a reference question or finding specific information and using the Internet.

Figure 3-7. Top Five Reasons for Visiting the Library.



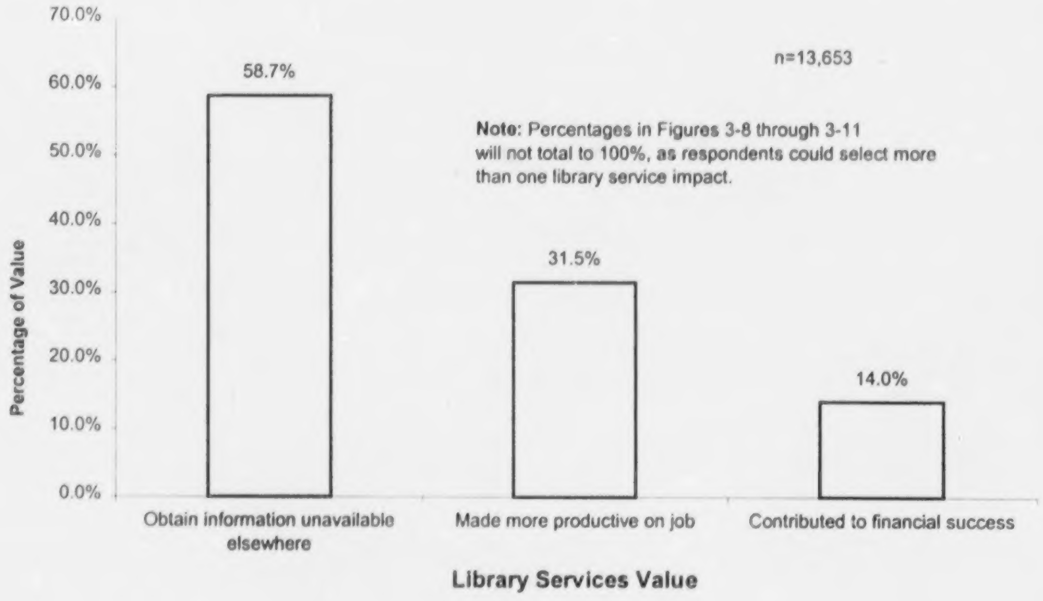
Benefits and Impacts of Library Services

Patrons identified several impacts and/or benefits of library services. These ranged from personal to educational to economic in nature.

Readers should note that Figures 3-8 through 3-11 present data from a single question on the user survey (see Appendix 3-A). This question asked users to identify ***all*** of the impacts and/or benefits that public library services had on them. Thus, none of the percentages in Figures 3-8 through 3-11 will total to 100%.

In determining the value of library services, 58.7% of patrons indicated that they were able to find information at the public library that they would otherwise not have been able to obtain, 31.5% indicated that the use of library services made them more productive in their current jobs, and 14.0% indicated that the use of library services made them more financially successful (see Figure 3-8).

Figure 3-8. Value of Library Services for Patrons.



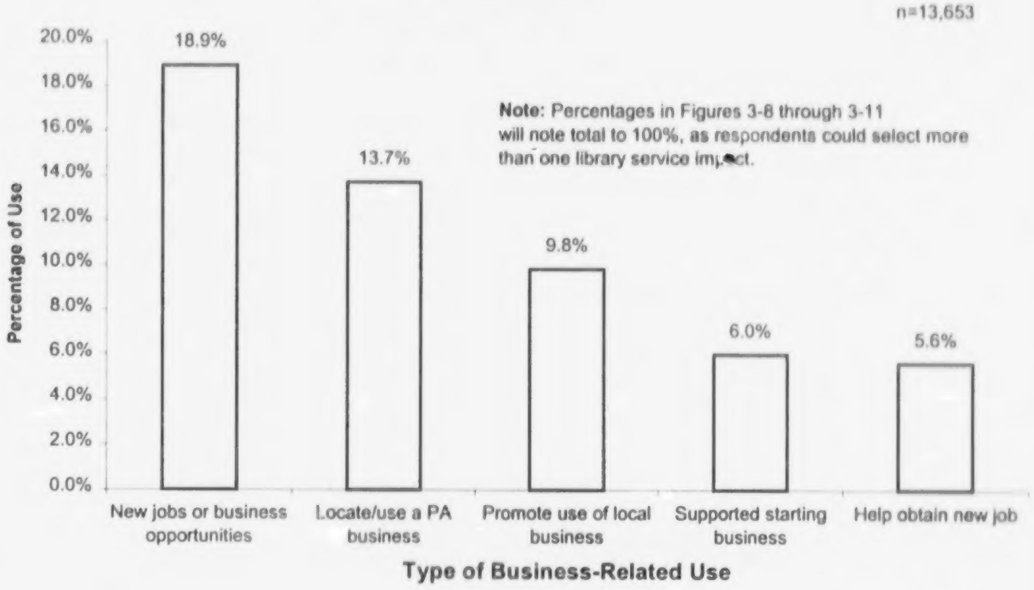
Note: Percentages in Figures 3-8 through 3-11 will not total to 100%, as respondents could select more than one library service impact.

For business-related uses of library services, 18.9% of patrons indicated that library services assisted them to find new jobs or business opportunities, 13.7% stated that library services assisted them to locate and use a Pennsylvania business, 9.8% stated that library services promoted the use of a local business, 6.0% found that library services supported starting a business, and 5.6% found that library services assisted them in obtaining a new job (see Figure 3-9).

Patrons also indicated that public library services assisted them in both formal and informal educational activities (see Figure 3-10). Indeed, 60.8% of users indicated that public library services contributed to their general education and 21.4% of users indicated that public library services contributed to their formal education (e.g., supported course work at higher education institutions).

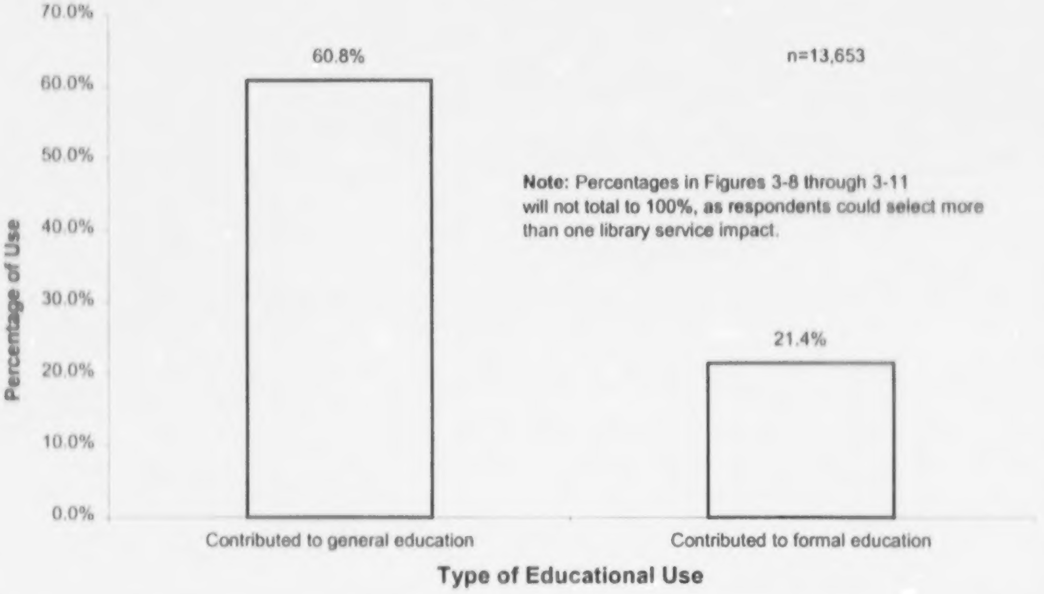
Public library-based technology serves two critical functions for patrons: (1) it introduces patrons to new and emerging technologies, and (2) it encourages patrons to bring new technologies into their homes (see Figure 3-11). For example, 28.1% of patrons indicated that public libraries introduced them to new technologies such as the Internet. Furthermore, 11.1% of patrons indicated that, because of the library's public access Internet services, they went out and purchased their own Internet accounts from Internet Service Providers (ISPs).

Figure 3-9. Business-Related Use of Library Services by Patrons.



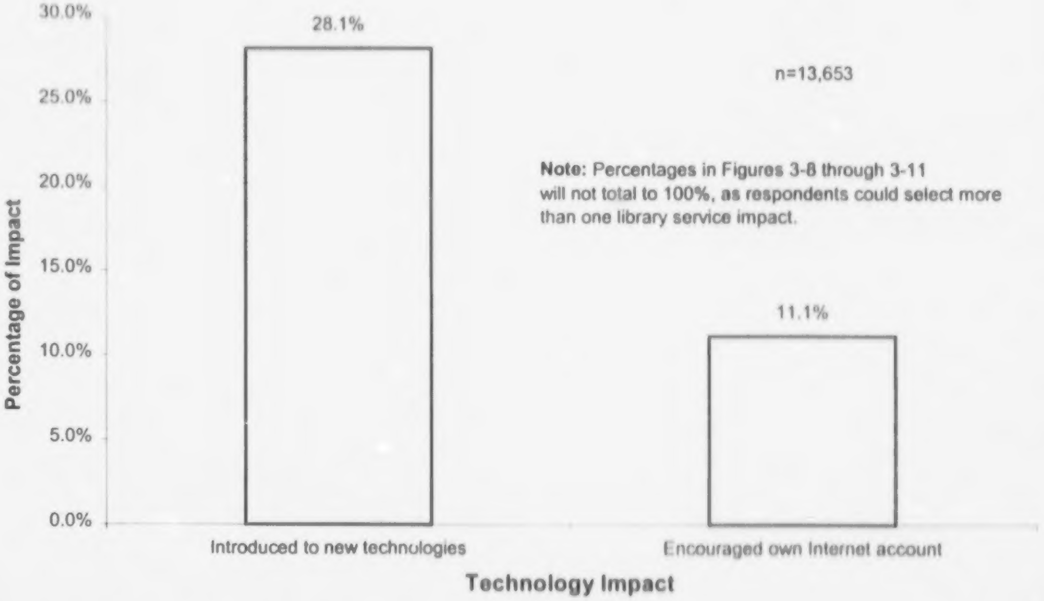
Note: Percentages in Figures 3-8 through 3-11 will note total to 100%, as respondents could select more than one library service impact.

Figure 3-10. Education-Related Use of Library Services by Users.



Note: Percentages in Figures 3-8 through 3-11 will not total to 100%, as respondents could select more than one library service impact.

Figure 3-11. Impact of Technology in Public Libraries.



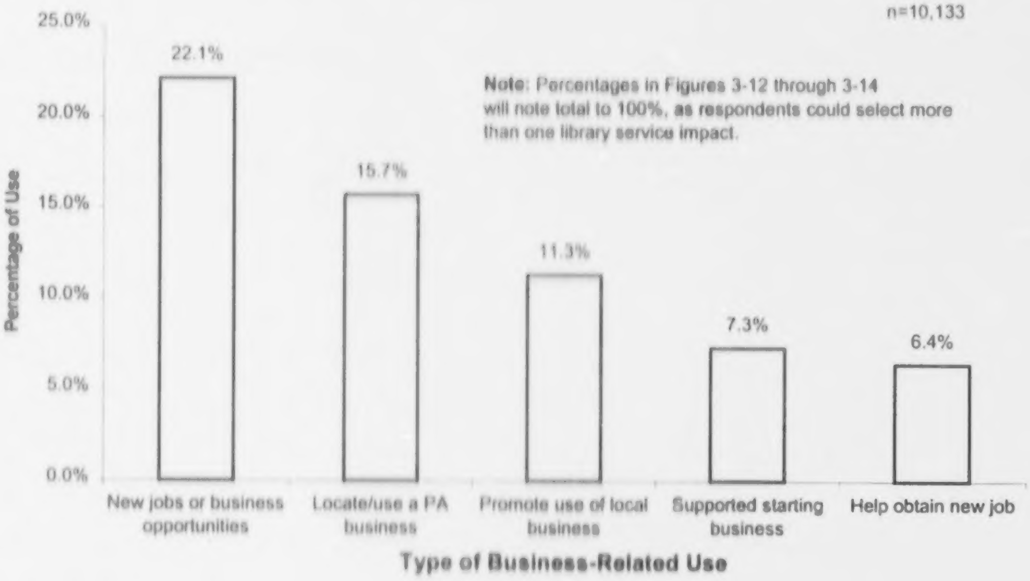
Note: Percentages in Figures 3-8 through 3-11 will not total to 100%, as respondents could select more than one library service impact.

Benefits to Library Patrons between the Age of 18 and 64

To better assess the impact of library services on patrons most likely to be in the Pennsylvania workforce, the investigators eliminated survey responses from patrons under 18 and over 65 years of age. By doing so, it is clear that the impact of library services on patrons increases (see Figures 3-12 through 3-14). That is, the:

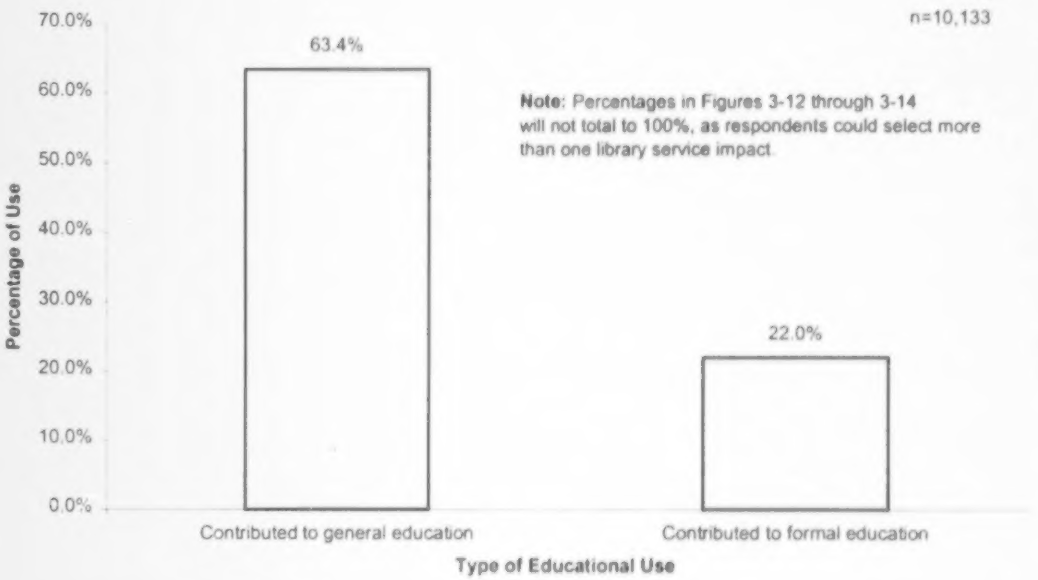
- Impact of business-related library services on patrons is greater (see Figure 3-12);
- Impact of education-related services on patrons is greater (see Figure 3-13); and
- Impact/benefit of technology-based library services is greater (see Figure 3-14).

Figure 3-12. Business-Related Use of Library Services by Patrons between the Age of 18 and 64.



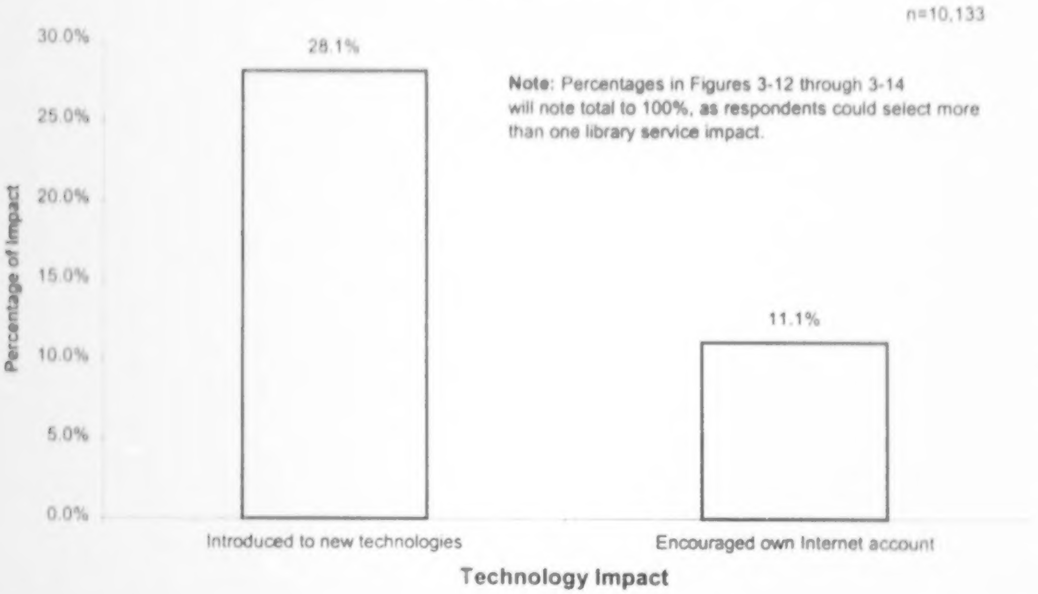
Note: Percentages in Figures 3-12 through 3-14 will note total to 100%, as respondents could select more than one library service impact.

Figure 3-13. Education-Related Use of Library Services by Patrons between the Age of 18 and 64.



Note: Percentages in Figures 3-12 through 3-14 will not total to 100%, as respondents could select more than one library service impact.

Figure 3-14. Impact of Technology in Public Libraries on Patrons between the Age of 18 and 64.



Note: Percentages in Figures 3-12 through 3-14 will note total to 100%, as respondents could select more than one library service impact.

Figure 3-15. Library Service Benefits by Urban/Rural Library Classification.

	Urban/Rural Status		
N=13,653	**Rural**	**Suburban**	**Urban**
Library Service Benefit			
Made you more productive on your job	29.5%	31.2%	39.7%
Helped you learn about new jobs or other business opportunities	16.8%	18.1%	29.3%
Helped you obtain a new job	4.1%	5.0%	13.8%
Supported starting a business on your own	4.7%	6.0%	11.4%
Promoted your use of a local business	9.0%	9.4%	14.2%
Contributed to your overall financial success	11.8%	15.3%	19.6%
Supported your education in a ***formal*** school, college, or university class	19.9%	21.1%	28.3%
Contributed to your learning and education, but ***not*** via a formal classroom setting	58.5%	62.4%	65.7%
Helped you locate and/or use a PA business	11.9%	10.1%	19.9%
Helped you obtain information that you could not have gotten elsewhere	56.3%	58.8%	67.7%
Introduced you to new technologies (e.g., the Internet)	26.9%	27.1%	35.5%
Encouraged you to go out and get your own Internet account from a local/other Internet service provider (e.g., America OnLine, Prodigy)	9.9%	11.3%	15.5%
Total Percentage of Rural, Suburban, and Urban Surveys	**51.7%** (n=7,065)	**35.1%** (n=4,794)	**13.1%** (n=1,794)

All differences between rural, suburban, and urban libraries were found statistically significant using the Chi Square procedure. Chi Square values range from 39.161 to 203.581, p<.0001.

Within Rural/Suburban/Urban Library User Analysis

One purpose of the user survey was to explore differences between library patrons along various factors. One area of interest was to examine the impact of library services on patrons by the urban/rural nature of the library.

As Figure 3-15 indicates, there are statistically significant differences of library service impacts and/or benefits by the urban/rural nature of the library. In particular, patrons indicate that library services in:

- Urban libraries help patrons learn more about new jobs or business opportunities (39.7%) as compared to library services in rural libraries (29.5%);

- Urban libraries help users obtain new jobs (13.8%) as compared to library services in rural libraries (4.1%);

- Urban libraries make users more productive on their jobs (39.7%) as compared to library services in rural libraries (29.5%);

- Urban libraries introduce patrons to new technologies (35.5%) as compared to library services in rural libraries (26.9%); and

- Urban libraries promote the acquisition of personal Internet accounts from ISPs (15.5%) as compared to library services in rural libraries (9.9%).

While the data show a somewhat more profound impact of library services in urban libraries, readers should realize that the data clearly demonstrate *that library services have an impact on patrons across all communities*.

Within Gender User Analysis

The impact and benefit data also demonstrate interesting differences between men and women library users (see Figure 3-16). Overall:

- Men find that library services help them learn more about new jobs or other business opportunities than do women (24.2% and 16.3%, respectively);

- Men find that library services are more likely to contribute to their financial success than do women (21.3% and 11.2%, respectively);

- Men find that library services are more beneficial towards general education purposes than do women (65.2% and 59.5%, respectively);

Figure 3-16. Library Service Benefits by Gender.

	Gender	
	Women	**Men**
Library Service Benefit		
Made you more productive on your job	29.8%	35.0%
Helped you learn about new jobs or other business opportunities	16.3%	24.2%
Helped you obtain a new job	4.7%	7.1%
Supported starting a business on your own	4.9%	8.1%
Promoted your use of a local business	9.2%	11.0%
Contributed to your overall financial success	11.2%	21.3%
Supported your education in a ***formal*** school, college, or university class	20.4%	24.0%
Contributed to your learning and education, but ***not*** via a formal classroom setting	59.5%	65.2%
Helped you locate and/or use a PA business	12.0%	17.4%
Helped you obtain information that you could not have gotten elsewhere	57.2%	63.3%
Introduced you to new technologies (e.g., the Internet)	26.1%	32.5%
Encouraged you to go out and get your own Internet account from a local/other Internet service provider (e.g., America OnLine, Prodigy)	9.6%	14.4%
Total Percentage of Surveys Completed by Women and Men	**71.5%** (n=8,900)	**28.5%** (n=3,556)

All differences between women and men were found statistically significant using the Chi Square procedure, except "Promoted use of a local business." Chi Square values range from 18.530 to 202.810, p<.0001.

- Men are more likely to use library services to get information that they would otherwise be unable to find than do women (63.3% and 57.2%, respectively); and

- Men are more likely to be encouraged to purchase their own Internet accounts through ISPs than are women (14.4% and 9.6%, respectively).

Men are, therefore, more likely to derive benefits from key library services than are women.

Readers should note, however, that while the differences between men and women are statistically significant, the data clearly indicate that *library services benefit substantially both men and women.*

Single Most Important Library Impact

The user survey also asked patrons to identify the single most important impact of the library on them. Although responses ranged from the specific to the general, it is possible to provide the following summary of library impacts:

- **Business**. Library services assist individuals to establish, grow, and/or diversify small businesses.

- **Literacy**. Library services promote, foster, and enhance literacy skills in children, young adults, and adults.

- **Education**. Library services supplement and augment the educational experience of students – both in the K-12 and higher education environments.

- **Information access**. Library services provide access to a wide range of information resources in a variety of formats (e.g., electronic, Internet, print).

- **Engagement**. Library services keep the mind active, a particularly powerful resource for retired individuals.

- **Arts and culture**. Library services promote an awareness of local, state, and national arts and culture.

- **Democracy**. Library services foster an informed citizenry, which in turn promotes citizenship.

Together, these serve as a core set of library service impacts on patrons. Readers should note that these impacts reinforce those impacts as identified through the case sites as presented in chapter 2 of this report.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The findings from the user survey indicate that public libraries in Pennsylvania provide the communities that they serve with numerous benefits that have substantial impacts. These benefits and impacts include the:

- Assistance of patrons to locate and obtain new job and business opportunities;
- Location and use of local/statewide business services;
- Introduction of new technologies (e.g., the Internet) to patrons;
- Promotion of economic development through new technologies such as the Internet by creating an interest in patrons to purchase Internet accounts;
- Enhancement of user productivity in their current jobs;
- Enhancement of personal financial success;
- Availability of information not available elsewhere;
- Support of educational pursuits – both formal (e.g., classroom) and personal; and
- Support of societal goods such as arts, culture, and democracy.

Moreover, it is important to note that library services serve users regardless of income level, gender, education level, or age. Thus, these findings suggest that library services support a wide range of patron groups in all areas throughout the state of Pennsylvania. In all those areas, patrons indicate that they use and value library services. In turn, the state in general, and the communities that the libraries serve in particular, derive substantial benefit from public library services.

CHAPTER 4:
MAXIMIZING IMPACTS

As the findings suggest, Pennsylvania public libraries have a great number of impacts on their communities. These impacts are sometimes economic in nature and sometimes less directly so, but all add directly to the quality of life of the communities libraries serve. Policymakers and the public, however, may not be aware of the significant impacts of public libraries provide as a result of their services, programs, and material.

STRATEGIES

Taken as a whole, the findings from the study suggest certain conclusions and key themes. The themes discussed below are not comprehensive, but, rather, are themes that maximize impacts from public library services. Public libraries that wish to increase impacts or otherwise better stress the development of key impacts on their community may wish to consider the following.

Knowing the Local Community

First, the study shows that intimate knowledge and evaluation of a particular public library's local environment is crucial. The public library needs this local knowledge not only so that it can provide better service to its community but also so that it can communicate most effectively with the public and policymakers to whom it is accountable. Certainly, knowing the needs of the community well, in conjunction with knowing how the library should fit as a partner in the community with other service providers, will empower the library to develop in directions most beneficial to the community and hopefully lead the library's patrons to view it as increasingly indispensable.

Simultaneously, intimate knowledge of the environment in which the public library is situated will allow the public library to "put its best foot forward" when communicating its achievements to those individuals or organizations to which it must answer. If the public library identifies local needs of importance to the community and is able to direct resources to meet those needs, clear communication of this fact will be well received. A critical success factor, however, is an ongoing process of identifying community information needs, determining which needs can be best met by the library, and then customizing programs to maximize impact on the local community. The new Public Library Association planning manual provides excellent suggestions in this area (Himmel and Wilson, 1998).

Promoting Economic Impacts

The study also suggests that it is becoming increasingly important for public libraries to make significant direct and indirect economic impacts upon their communities. Many users "expected" the library to make such contributions without fully realizing the level of effort and expenses involved. Economic impacts are accomplished most directly through the provision of targeted service to businesses. Businesses, after all, are the economic engines of the locality in which the public library finds itself. Further, policymakers are today continually attempting to attract and keep businesses in communities. The public library that is seen as aiding policymakers in attracting and keeping businesses in the community will most likely find its stature in the community in the eyes of policymakers grow exponentially.

If a public library manages to make itself directly valuable, and maybe even indispensable, to a range of community businesses, resources for the library which were scarce *may* become more stable, either through the recognition by policymakers that public libraries are instrumental to the local economy or through the recognition by businesses that public libraries are providing them with services they need. Local policymakers listen to the businesses in their communities for the same reason that libraries should: businesses hold the economic power in a community. Public libraries may be well-served by carefully developing services for those who wield economic power. The public library then becomes a vital participant in the economic well-being of the community rather than continuing as one of many "quality of life" factors.

Planning for and Maximizing Impacts

Many public libraries do not understand how to promote the economic impacts or other significant impacts they have on their communities. This may be due to the traditional isolation of the public library from other aspects of public life or to the fact that librarians are generally not educated in the art of planning, marketing, developing, and promoting economic impacts. It is absolutely crucial that librarians gain knowledge of how to promote the impacts their libraries are making because if the public and policymakers are not aware of these impacts, they might as well not occur. People who pay taxes and people who allocate taxes need to be apprised of the concrete impacts those dollars are making in their community.

A primary example of promoting the impacts of public libraries in the community is that of the public library subsidy of K-12 education. In every community that the investigators visited, the public library was the focal point, meeting place, or research center for K-12 students. The library was, simultaneously, a safe haven, a place to access advanced technologies such as the Internet, and a vast resource or set of resources which students used to complete their assignments or supplement their in-school learning activities. In many cases, the public and private schools did not have reference collections or other necessary resources -- e.g., Internet workstations, even though teachers assigned homework that required use of the Internet -- to help students complete their homework assignments. As such, public libraries, collectively, subsidize substantially the education of Pennsylvania K-12 students.

Related to K-12 students is the home-schooling population. For this population, the public library is the primary, and sometimes only, resource for home-schooling parents to gain access to resources for curriculum development.

During the study, one librarian commented that she did not realize that her library had provided such a range of impacts – a number of which were economic in nature – to the local community. She said that "I am just doing my job." Librarians that wish to plan for and promote specific impacts to improve the community may be able to better maximize such impacts through a formal planning effort. Most libraries, for a host of reasons, do not plan for maximizing such efforts. Again, the Himmel and Wilson (1998) planning guide can help librarians do a better job of planning for high impact services and programs.

Types of Impacts

Librarians need to understand the differences among types of impacts and determine which are most important for their particular communities. Libraries that provide significant impacts to their communities do so at multiple levels. First, the user of the service is directly impacted, and next, the community in general is impacted at a later point in time when the original user implements what was gained from the library's resources. Librarians who understand the different types of impacts (as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3) will be better able to allocate their resources to increase the magnitude of the significant impacts their library makes.

The ability to distinguish between the types of impacts, determining which impacts are most critical for a particular community, and implementing strategies to maximize those impacts gives librarians more power over the direction of the library, power that can ultimately translate into greater stability or stature for the library.

Measuring and Documenting Impacts

Public librarians need, in their particular context, to identify the impacts that their services make on their communities and then to choose an appropriate evaluation measure of that impact. This must be communicated to the public, politicians, policymakers, and resource donors.

As shown in this study, it is possible to use a number of techniques to identify, describe, and document the impacts resulting from public library services, resources, and programs. The three basic techniques of a critical incident log of significant impacts, the statewide user survey, and the site visits with focus group sessions and group interviews combined to present a powerful picture of public library impacts throughout the state.

In addition, there is an excellent manual that offers specific strategies and techniques as well as useful performance measures for measuring impacts from public library services. This manual, written by IER Planning, Research and Management Services. (1998) is titled *The Library's Contribution to your Community; A Resource Manual for*

Libraries to Document their Social and Economic Contribution to the Local Community. Published by the Southern Ontario Library Service in Gloucester, Ontario, it is an outstanding reference tool to assist public libraries measure and document the impacts that result from their services.

Obtaining Resources to Promote Impacts

Unfortunately, the ability to distinguish between impacts does not automatically mean that a librarian will be able to utilize that knowledge immediately. Librarians achieving significant impacts in their communities will be themselves performing above and beyond what is currently expected of them. It may well be unrealistic to expect libraries to be able to increase the significant impacts they make in light of the current funding levels and staffing situations in public libraries. The study suggests that often, production of significant impacts from public libraries results from leveraging existing resources and cutting other services rather than obtaining new resources. It is unlikely that many public libraries can maximize significant impacts on their communities without additional resources or completing a major redeployment of existing resources.

The site visits show that it is unrealistic to expect greater performance and productivity from public libraries given their current levels of funding. If impacts from public libraries are to be expanded and maximized, additional funding will be needed. Indeed, there is a fear that many public libraries simply cannot continue to perform at their current levels and will develop poor morale among staff if they must continue to provide current levels of service with existing resources.

Using Political Acumen

It is extremely important for librarians to become politically aware and involved. Some of the site visits found librarians joining the chambers of commerce in their communities, becoming members of key community organization boards, serving on other community organizations, and speaking at various organization meetings. One library director commented that "two-thirds of my job is to stay on top of the political environment in this community and be able to have strong political links between the library and the community."

Librarians need to become public figures in the community. At the same time, librarians need to sharpen their ability to maneuver within the system. Knowing what issues are important, who the key figures are in the community and in policy-making bodies, and being able to work effectively within the confines of the system will empower librarians to move the public library in a positive direction. Such political acumen is essential if the library wishes to maximize impacts on its community and be recognized for such efforts.

ISSUES THAT DIRECTLY AFFECT IMPACTS: FUNDING AND STAFFING

The evidence provided throughout this study unequivocally indicates that Pennsylvania public libraries have a deep, profound, and highly beneficial impact on Pennsylvania residents. Clearly, libraries provide a range of services, programs, and resources that are contemporary, relevant, and useful to the residents of the Commonwealth. There are two opposing dualities that characterize the current situation of Pennsylvania's libraries as revealed through this study. They are:

- Public libraries are extremely valuable community institutions, provide a range of important and high impact services and resources, and yet
- Public libraries face enormous challenges in securing funds and an adequate economic base to provide such services and resources.

Public libraries throughout the state face increasing demands for resources, programs, and services from all sectors of the community. Simultaneously, the challenge to the libraries to obtain sufficient funding for even the most basic services continues to increase, thus the second opposing duality:

- Library staff are the key ingredient of excellent libraries – their personalized services to Pennsylvania residents contributes to the greatest impacts from library services and programs, and yet
- There is inadequate and poorly compensated staffing in virtually all the libraries visited as well as many others in the state – recruiting, training, and retaining high quality library staff is essential.

The quantity and quality of public library staff is an important critical success factor in the effectiveness of library service and the ultimate utility of this service in residents' lives. Yet, the ability to retain and develop high quality staff has become incredibly difficult in Pennsylvania. The investigators were constantly reminded of these issues during the various site visits.

Recognizing the Importance of Public Libraries as Extremely Valuable Community Institutions

Public libraries are an invaluable community resource in many Pennsylvania communities. This is especially true in rural communities as exemplified by Montrose and Bellwood. The centrality of the library as a resource is probably the single, chief issue of the Susquehanna County Historical Society & Free Library of Montrose. The rural nature of life in Montrose, complicated by its poverty and geographic isolation, magnifies the importance of all public institutions, and especially the library in this particular community.

The library is often a place of last resort and frequently of first resort in myriad ways. All contributions of the library to social and civic life are intensified in a place where

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there are few, and often no other public resources. There is a sense of frustration and urgency among the residents who recognize the area's plight. Many feel abandoned by the state government, to whom they look with an earnest expectation for help. As one of the librarians eloquently appealed, "this is the traditional America that everybody talks about - the flag, the waves of grain - but we are really struggling here. We need help here." Indeed, Montrose is the embodiment of the national mythology of an "all-American" small town with traditional values. There is a strong sentiment of expectation among local residents regarding the library and its services that simply cannot be disappointed without fatally damaging the contract between citizens and the Commonwealth.

The Bellwood-Antis Public Library, like many other public libraries that serve largely rural populations, is a key community cultural institution. A Bellwood resident of many years describes how she sees the library, "I have always thought of our library as a cultural center. We display a lot of artwork and people's treasures, collections, so it's really interesting to come in and see the resources here within our small community." Another patron states, "I've lived here all my life and this library is probably the neatest thing that's ever happened to the community because it provided an upscale environment that not everybody in this community has been exposed to."

Some libraries are undergoing tremendous growth. Many libraries studied have recently been renovated and expanded (James V. Brown, Susquehanna, Bellwood-Antis) or received new buildings relatively recently (Mt. Lebanon, Boyertown). The Boyertown Community Library has undergone amazing growth. In the less than ten years since the library has existed, it has moved to a larger location three times and in 1997 it had a circulation that was one-quarter of that of the Reading Public Library (a significantly larger county library) while being open only 35 hours a week. The following anecdote describes the incredible use of the library by Boyertown residents:

> Last summer, the circulation system was upgraded so for a week the staff could check-out books by hand, but they could not check in books. They were forced to close the library for one day that week because there were simply no more children's books on the shelves. Within the span of a week, most of the children's collection had been checked out or returned but could not be placed back on the shelves until the circulation system was completed.

Such situations depict the importance of the library and the perception on the part of the users that the services provided by the library are absolutely essential.

Urban libraries also experience overwhelming demand for services and resources. The Free Library of Philadelphia receives tremendous demands for services from students after school. The libraries, and especially the neighborhood branches, are simply overwhelmed by the number of students who visit the library after school. The library is a popular destination for students who are left to their own devices after school and who are in need of a safe, educational, and fun place to go. The staff try to meet some of their needs through special programs, yet the demand for after school services is exceedingly high and the staff feels under pressure to serve a large number of students while simultaneously providing all of the regular services for adult patrons.

Many staff members suspect that some parents use the public library as an after school childcare service; as one librarian states, "in my community…a lot of kids go to the library [after school] and wait there for their parents to pick them up…what we try to do is give them little jobs at the library so they can be volunteers…it's a struggle for us because we don't know what to do with them…They stay in the library and that's their place to be after school." A pastor confirmed their suspicion by reporting what he has observed at his neighborhood branch, "more and more in our community, the library is becoming a community center. Children, whose parents cannot afford after school care, go to the library and spend their two or two and a half hours there waiting for parents to come home from work."

Another librarian said, "as a system, we are trying to cope with the fact that there is a large latchkey population in the city. And what happens is that the kids come to the library after school and because there are so many, they determine the environment of the library." Another librarian noted, "people are complaining too because we are successful. They complain because there's no place to sit. What can we do about that? Hang them from the ceiling? I don't know…there's no other place to put tables, no additional place to put chairs. We have children sitting in the aisles on the floor…"

In short, the essential nature of libraries goes well beyond traditional services; they are a key ingredient for the overall welfare and success of the local community. While there is uniformity of opinion and evidence as to the important, indeed essential role of Pennsylvania public libraries, there is also considerably less understanding as to the costs and level of effort needed for the library to be "important" and contribute a range of significant impacts to the local community. Worse, there is a sense in a number communities that the libraries can "do more with less" or otherwise contribute a range of existing services with their current level of funding. This is just not possible.

Public Libraries Face Enormous Challenges in Raising Funds

The flip-side of the benefit and impacts that public libraries provide is that the challenging funding situation that threatens the ability of the libraries to have ongoing impacts. In a context where many, and perhaps most, Pennsylvania public libraries are significantly underfunded ("Libraries in Distress," 1997), the degree to which they can continue providing significant impacts from services and resources is questionable.

A Few Libraries Are Relatively Well-Funded By Local Governments

As the previous section indicated, there is great demand for library services. Some communities recognize the importance of library service and provide adequate levels of local support. Of the ten site visits, two in particular enjoyed great local support: Mt. Lebanon Public Library and Ludington Library (Lower Merion Library System). Both of these libraries are located in stable, established, affluent communities. Both developed and maintain good relationships with the local government.

The Lower Merion Library System enjoys a particularly close and amicable relationship with the township government. Ludington Library itself enjoys the highest per capita funding of all public libraries in the Commonwealth. The director and assistant director of the system have their offices in the township administration building. Thus, the presence of the library is always among the commissioners. The system director, assistant director, and the six library heads appear on the township organizational charts; the library heads are "middle-managers" in the township government.

Most Libraries Lack Sufficient Local Funding For Basic Resources

Unfortunately, Ludington and Mt. Lebanon are exceptions to the general trend among the libraries studied. Despite general off-the-chart demand, funding is a problem in most of the focus group libraries. Most of the focus group libraries lack sufficient local support for a variety of reasons.

For instance, the Boyertown Community Library lacks monetary support from the local township governments (it only received $2,700 from the township for the entire year in 1997 for public library service). The library lacks the proper support and recognition of the community government. Unlike the Lower Merion Library System, whose head librarians appear on the township organization charts, when the downtown Boyertown map was recently revised, the library was left off of the map altogether. The Boyertown Community Library was born in controversy -- despite incredibly high use among many, some in the community still question the need for a public library. The Boyertown Senior High School was (and remains) a public library for the community. Many Boyertown residents are concerned about using the high school library. One patron stated "I went to the high school library and I felt so bad. I checked out a book and then I felt so guilty. I felt like I was taking books away from students who needed them."

The Bellwood-Antis Public Library is an excellent institution located in a small, rural area with a modest funding base. The community does support the library and patronizes its services, but there are limits to the resources of a small community such as Bellwood. The town of Bellwood is built to capacity -- there is more demand for housing than available housing stock. Many of the residents of Bellwood are elderly, and are on fixed incomes so the borough government can't raise the taxes. Consequently, the local government cannot offer the library much money. The greatest funding need in the library is the operational budget. The library has received some donations, grants, and in-kind aid to acquire a building, furnish it, and stock it with computers. However, these donations do not keep the electricity or water in the building nor do they pay the staff.

The entire library staff consists of two individuals who each receive a small salary and no benefits. A member of the library board states, "Funding is very critical, and somehow or other, our legislators have to get the message that they must increase funding to libraries not just for technological advances, but for operational funding." The library director confirms this:

> I think it's far easier to go out to individuals or organizations and say, 'I want to get a new computer' -- because it's glitzy and people want to be involved in that sort of thing. Nobody wants to pay the light bill…Nobody wants to give the kind of money you need to keep the library open…We were able, with those grants, to get the new computers…but it was far easier to raise bigger amounts of money to do the building project because it's something people can see. But we can't get those same people to give us an annual contribution. It's really that basic kind of funding that needs to be addressed and that is really lacking in Pennsylvania."

Furthermore, budgeting is difficult at the library; this difficulty leads to ambiguous situations. The director said, "we have a real cash flow problem. We have months when we have $53.00 left in the checking account at the end of the month. We have to borrow money from the memorial book account to balance the budget for a month and put it back when the allotment from the township comes in. But then, we end up borrowing it again." The assistant librarian counters with a macabre budgeting scenario, "if you haven't had a lot of deaths in your town for five years, and you don't have a lot of memorial money coming in, that account is not as fat as it has been in other times. So you may not have that access to that money because you've purchased the memorial books."

Another example of the local funding situation of public libraries and the determination of public library directors is that of the Allentown Public Library. In this particular public library, the director values the library staff and the community the staff serves. As such, the director strives to compensate her staff well -- and it shows: Allentown Public Library has little to no staff turnover. To do so, and to simultaneously meet the needs of the community, the library director has an annual budget shortfall of approximately $300,000. Every year, the director seeks various ways -- particularly foundation grants -- to make up that budget shortfall and is successful at doing so!

These and other stories related to the investigators combine to paint a picture of funding strategies and budgeting that significantly hinder the development of public libraries -- often in places that need them the most. That these libraries can still have significant impact on their communities is, given their operating conditions, simply incredible.

Funding Structures Hurt Some Libraries and Limit Their Ability to Obtain Adequate Funding

Governance laws, funding ambiguities in the state law, and local funding structures and changes in how libraries are funded affect the financial situations of public libraries. Two examples of this are those of the Bellwood-Antis Public Library and the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh.

Beyond the basic need for more funds, the funding structures that were meant to reward libraries have hurt the Bellwood-Antis Public Library. The director reports that the annual operating budget is $85,000. The director also reports a significant amount of use by individuals from other, neighboring counties. The county funds all of its libraries through a formula based on three criteria: population served, amount of money raised locally, and circulation. This method has caused the library problems this year in receiving all of the funding to which it is entitled. According to the director:

> Even though we raised [a lot of] money locally…If we would say to the county, 'this is how much money we raised this year', that would mean that we would get almost everybody's money this year and everybody else wouldn't get any…one of the public libraries in the county would go under if they didn't get their part of the money this year…So it's really unfair. I don't want a library to have to close their doors, but doggone it, we worked hard for this money and we can't get it matched. It isn't fair at all unless you want to be really cutthroat about it.

In short the libraries are forced to compete with one another, and the need for operating funds cannot be replaced by constant external fundraising. Most frequently, the investigators found situations in which libraries were "expected" to raise large amounts of money for day-to-day operating expenses.

The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh has experienced an evolution in funding that has ultimately hurt the financial situation of the library and placed them in peril in terms of long-term funding. One librarian related the funding history:

> For the first fifty years, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh had been perceived and was funded pretty much as a city library. The city of Pittsburgh took care of it and the city of Pittsburgh owned almost all of our facilities and we were their child. In 1956, Allegheny County said, 'hey we'll put a line item in our budget, we want you to provide bookmobile service to unserved communities in Allegheny County and we want you to give free library cards to all the residents in Allegheny County'…over the years, city and county funding began to be pretty even and, of course, there was state funding.
>
> The county and the city were very pleased when the Regional Asset District (RAD) was formed, the county still kept us as a line item for the bookmobile service and automation for the EIN [Electronic Information Network], the city, however, reverted back to the original terms that had been worked out with Andrew Carnegie a hundred and one years ago, where he said that the city must provide at least $40,000 a year. So therefore, our funding is dreadful…Our library materials book fund is hurting. We are part of the museum complex in this building -- this is a shared facility -- we have to pay overhead for this complex, it's a huge chunk that other libraries don't have to pay; they can go and probably do the cheapest buildings and grounds, but because of size and infrastructure of this huge facility, we're probably paying more in

> terms of overhead...around half a million dollars, and that's significant in a library budget.

Additionally, at the interview session with the Carnegie library staff members, many of the branch librarians reported that their budgets have been cut-off. Clearly the long-term funding situation is tenuous at best and cataclysmic at worst. The RAD, a taxing body that was formed to help libraries and other institutions designated as regional assets, was only guaranteed for a ten year period. After the ten year period, the financial situation could rapidly deteriorate because the RAD is not compelled to fund the library at any level afterward. As one staff member put it, "[RAD] has proved to be beneficial, but the question is, is it going to continue, is it long-term and permanent, or does it become a subject of political whim?"

It Is Very Difficult for Some Libraries to Raise Private Funds

The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, for example, has had a difficult time raising private funds. One reason is that citizens fail to understand how the library is funded. A librarian describes the problem as follows: "our situation is bad because of our name. Everyone assumes that we have unlimited funds because our name is Carnegie. Everybody I know says to me, 'Well you know you have all of this money because you get all these endowments' and no, we don't have any money." There is not, nor was there ever, an endowment for the library from Andrew Carnegie.

She continues, "The museum has an endowment but we do not, and it makes it difficult because we're in the same building so everyone assumes that the money falls like gold on every place." Individuals who do, understand the funding needs of the library are distressed that the city officials don't understand library funding. One of the community leaders declared that:

> In our advocacy effort, we have a team assigned to all of our local public officials. And what we've found with the city council, which has the legal responsibility to maintain the library, is that the council members say 'well go get money from the foundations. Go get money from somewhere else.' Well, by law, the Carnegie Library cannot go get funding from foundations for operating budgets. Carnegie gave the library to the city in return for the promise that the city would own and maintain those libraries and run them. We cannot get the point through to them that they have legal responsibilities.

Raising private funds at Carnegie has been difficult, too, because of politics. A librarian said, "historically, the library has had a difficult time in raising funds because, internally, it was perceived as being in competition with other local institutions." There are problems for the library to compete for private funds, endowments, and grants because there is the perception that it would then compete with other agencies and institutions that more traditionally depend on private funding.

Public perception of the funding situation does not improve matters. The library increased the number of hours it was open to the public in order to serve the public better. "Because we've increased our hours," quotes one staff member, "that's led to a lot of false hopes by the public because they really think we have money because of the RAD money we have this image." Another librarian noted, "what doesn't come across [to the public] is that a sacrifice was made for that, and the sacrifice is that the wheelchair ramps are going to be put in, one branch at a time, so that's a twenty year process. That's twenty years to be compliant with ADA [Americans With Disabilities Act]. That means not getting hundred-year-old window sashes that leak like sieves replaced. That's the sacrifice. The sacrifice essentially is capital and staffing."

Importance of Library Staff

The library staff make the difference between a pile of books and computers and a first-rate library. Without exception, the patrons from every site visit credit the staff with being the key ingredient to the success of their library. The patrons all genuinely appreciate the dedication of the staff of their libraries and note that it is the intervention of the staff that makes their library use so beneficial. Library staff provide a value-added bonus to the materials available at the library. For many Pennsylvania residents, library resources would be virtually useless without the intervention of the library staff.

For example, the East Shore Area Library staff provides excellent service that their patrons appreciate. Many patrons have specifically mentioned that the staff was efficient, pleasant, helpful, professional, tolerant (when they bring in many noisy children), patient and thoughtful. An elderly patron describes how she appreciates the staff: "hand-in-hand with this wonderful 'world of books' is a world of wonderful people who staff the library. They are caring, kind and helpful. It is more than a library, it's a friend."

Many of the citizens of the largely rural, Susquehanna County really depend on the staff at the public library in Montrose, not only for their professional excellence and expertise, but also for their care and nurturing. One patron privately confided:

> I come here to talk to the librarians about intellectual things and whenever they have the time, they talk to me about philosophy and literature. They really know a lot. One of the librarians has a bachelor's degree from an Ivy League college but she doesn't ever tell anyone about it. A degree like that really impresses me. And I really appreciate having someone really educated to talk to around here.

The Allentown Public Library is an example of a library where public service is greatly emphasized. The commitment to public service is genuine because budgetary priority is placed on adequate funding for staff rather than in a bigger materials budget. All staff are required to perform some public service work -- even the custodians can check out a book and answer the telephone. There is significant cross-training among the staff - for example, all reference librarians are required to work in children's services, the catalogers must work in reference one day a month, etc. The library boasts of a well-trained. According to the director:

> Where are we different [from many other Pennsylvania libraries]? We are not even a blue collar community, we are a welfare city. We spend less per capita, we have fewer books per capita, we have more turnover of the collection per capita, by significant amounts, and we have higher use per capita. And where we spend our money differently is on personnel. We have more trained people than libraries of our size. The conclusion I draw, and I look every year at those numbers, and until they change, I'm not going to change my strategy, my interpretation of this is that we have a population that does better when there is a trained person helping them -- when there is an intermediary between the material and themselves.

The investigators would agree without reservation to the conclusion reached by this library director.

Despite the relationship between effective service and library staffing, it has become increasingly difficult for even the best Pennsylvania libraries to maintain adequate staffing. The major issues in staffing are that there are too few staff members to provide adequate service, that salaries are too low, and that because of low salaries, public libraries cannot retain an adequate staff.

Too Few Staff Members

The Bellwood-Antis Public Library is open 33 hours a week, yet employs only two paid staff members. There are 16 to 18 regular volunteers who do the cataloging, all of the shelving, and circulation. The director and assistant librarian do all of the reference and instruction and paperwork. They receive a "pathetic" salary and routinely work extra hours at night and on weekends. The Boyertown Community Library is in a similar staffing situation. There are three paid staff members; a tremendous amount of work at the library is performed by members of the Board of Trustees, by members of the Friends of the Library, and by general volunteers and library supporters.

Many of the librarians at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh have sadly noticed that the number of staff members working at the branches has decreased while their workload has subsequently increased. They report that there are significantly fewer (one staff reported 40% fewer) employees than 20 years ago. They also report that morale is low at all positions, professional and non-professional. "Morale is at its worst in the last twenty years." This decrease in staff has been devastating for the patrons because the quality of service has suffered significantly.

A staff member from the Foundation Center at the Carnegie library states:

> We're staffing for 69 hours a week and we're supposed to have three full-time staff people. We do not have three full-time staff people except for two months out of the 14 months I have been here. And it has been particularly difficult in working with the non-profit organizations who are increasingly needy. It's just incredibly draining. You want so much to help these people. You can spend easily, with any given

> patron, anywhere from a half an hour to an hour just getting them started because they don't understand the grant-seeking process. To many of them it's a very new process.

Another staff member offered a more light-hearted analysis of the difficulty of the situation: "we want to be all things to all people. We want to give them books, we want to give them computers, we want to give them services, we want to give them programs, we want to give them outreach, we want to give them everything and we have three staff members."

The staff at Carnegie performs important work and even with volunteer help, the whole process is labor intensive:

> I don't feel exploited, but I do feel challenged because at any given point I feel like I'm running a three ring circus; I've got everything, I love it all. I've got bicycle repair in my branch for kids whose bicycles are broken in the neighborhood. I've got all kinds of programs that may be off-beat, but they all take time in order to make them work well, they take pulling in community volunteers and they take nurturing to make sure that they work.

Clearly, there is a limit to what can be reasonably expected for library staff responsibilities – especially in light of continued demand for new or expanded services.

Low Staff Salaries

A serious staffing issue for Pennsylvania public libraries is the extremely low salaries offered to workers. For far too many libraries in the state, professionals who hold a Master's degree in Library Science are working in jobs that pay minimum wage and offer no benefits. The rural and small libraries such as the Susquehanna County Library, Boyertown Library and the Bellwood-Antis Library were particularly likely to offer low salaries.

For instance, the Susquehanna County Historical Society and Free Library, which maintains an excellent staff, offers a beginning professional librarian salary of minimum wage, $5.15 an hour. This low wage results in an annual income that is less than $11,000 a year for a professional librarian with a Master's degree. The library director feels badly that the salaries are low and is concerned about attracting good staff to come to such a remote area for work. The Boyertown Community Library provides no benefits for their employees nor does the Bellwood-Antis Public Library.

Retaining Staff

The larger library systems such as the Dauphin County Library System and the Carnegie Library report that they have difficulty in retaining trained staff members. The deputy director of the Carnegie Library reports with some frustration that they hire new library school graduates and invest a lot in training them in the libraries. She notes that, after receiving training, many of these staff members leave Carnegie for other libraries that can offer better salaries.

Low salaries are not just endemic to small or rural libraries. Larger, urban library systems such as the Dauphin County System (East Shore Area Library) needs more resources for their staff members. The staff members themselves desire better salaries and want more training. The smaller branches particularly experience problems resulting from inadequate staffing levels and a lack of training in certain things. A problem that a staff member identified is that many new library professionals accept positions at the system libraries where they work for low salaries until they can get enough experience to obtain better paying positions in other libraries.

Library directors need the resources to not only develop talented professionals, but to retain them as well. A member of the staff describes this trend:

> When people leave here, they almost apologize. In fact they do in many cases. They wish they can stay and they are very upset…When they do leave it is because they are looking for full time employment and they found it. Some of the reference people that train with us, and I've had several, can get a job at one of the academic libraries. And they apologize all over the place and they say, "I really don't want to leave you."

It's not a case of "I don't like working here and I quit. I can't think of many people at all who have ever left for that reason. It's because of economic reasons that a lot of staff leave." The director confirms this, "We can't compete [with other libraries in the salaries we offer]…To the Commonwealth Libraries we lost one of our directors…I'm guessing we were paying her maybe $28,000 or $29,000 here…and she went to [another library] for over $40,000."

Currently, many Pennsylvania public librarians and staff are providing services, programs, and resources that require them to go way beyond "the call of duty." It is a tribute to their professionalism, dedication, and commitment to their users that they continue such level of effort. That such significant impacts result from public library services, statewide, given this staffing situation, is a tribute to the work by these staff.

QUESTIONS REQUIRING ADDITIONAL REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to identify users, uses, impacts, and benefits from public library services, resources, and programs. Chapters 2 and 3 report on the findings related to this purpose. But these chapters also identified a range of issues and concerns related to Pennsylvania public libraries. The degree to which public libraries can provide and enhance the impacts identified earlier in this report are inextricably linked to funding and other issues. Key questions that require additional review by state and local policymakers, residents, and the broad public library community include:

- Statewide funding. Is the current statutory basis for funding Pennsylvania public libraries appropriate for the current situation? Are responsibilities and procedures clearly outlined and delineated? To what degree are the existing statewide policies related to funding public libraries effective and promote the overall health and vitality of public libraries?

- Local funding. Why are there such discrepancies among funding and resources for Pennsylvania public libraries? Is it appropriate to expect local public libraries to raise contributions and other sources simply to meet day-to-day operational costs? Are there models of local funding strategies that work best for different types of libraries in different types of settings?

- Staffing. What strategies can be taken to improve salaries and benefits for Pennsylvania public librarians and staff? How can staff be encouraged to stay in the state, how can they receive additional training – especially with regard to promoting public library impacts, and how can they receive better recognition and visibility for the work they do in their local communities?

- Public library roles. To what degree are public libraries *expected* to provide a range of impacts that cover social service agencies to surrogate schools, to senior programs, to economic development agencies, to traditional library services – and all points in between? Is it reasonable to expect public libraries to be all things to all people given the funding issues outlined earlier?

To some degree, the recommendations offered in an earlier study completed by these authors regarding the need for *statewide* planning and development of *statewide* public library funding remains (McClure and Bertot, 1997, pp. 100-102). But statewide planning and development of statewide resources for public library services require attention, *now*.

USING IMPACTS TO PROMOTE THE PUBLIC LIBRARY

This study suggests that there are numerous impacts that result from public library services and programs. Yet to be understood, however, is (1) the degree to which policymakers expect libraries to contribute to local community impacts such as economic development, social services, etc., (2) the degree to which policymakers are willing to fund libraries in this role, and (3) the degree to which the public library community plans for and maximizes significant impacts to result from its services and programs. The reality is that many Pennsylvania public libraries are barely "holding their own" in terms of maintaining existing services and programs.

Can continued promotion of significant impacts for economic development and/or other impacts to politically important community groups increase the visibility and importance of the public library? Perhaps more importantly, can the promotion of such impacts increase funding for library services? Many public libraries appear to have provided such impacts and received minimal financial rewards for such efforts. In such a financially impoverished environment, one might logically ask: "how can public libraries continue to provide such impacts?"

Local community members are often unaware of the impacts resulting from library services and programs. In addition, public libraries can find themselves in a catch-22 situation where they must first develop and implement programs and services that result in significant impacts *before* they can obtain adequate resources to support those services. Once implemented, then they must *hope* that additional funding will support the new services – in many cases, that support does not materialize.

Ultimately, however, state and local policymakers, local communities, as well as individual public libraries will need to determine the degree to which significant impacts, such as economic impacts, promote the role of the public library in *that* community and the degree to which the library should be funded to provide such impacts. Currently, as this study suggests, many significant impacts result from Pennsylvania public library services, programs, and resources. The extent to which this can continue in the current financial environment, however, is problematic at best.

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In 1995, McClure and Bertot completed a study funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF) that examined federal policies related to enhancing the role of public libraries in the networked environment. Also in 1995, as part of the NSF study with additional funding from the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS), McClure and Bertot produced *Internet Costs and Cost Models for Public Libraries*. McClure, with Bertot and Zweizig, completed a national survey of public libraries and their use of the Internet. This study and its final report, *Public Libraries and the Internet: Survey Findings and Key Issues*, was published in September 1996.

McClure's research has been recognized by awards from the American Society for Information Science, the American Library Association, and the Association for Library and Information Science educators. He was the founding editor of *Internet Research* and is a frequent speaker at professional associations and meetings.

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Most recently, Bertot and McClure are completing a study on the statewide network DEL-AWARE which includes assessing the use and impact of this statewide effort. Bertot is also completing work on a project that is assessing the impact of networking on public libraries in Australia. Bertot brings to the project an outstanding background in public library networking and user studies; methodological expertise; and significant experience in organizing and analyzing various types of survey data. Many of the above reports and studies can be found on McClure's homepage <http://istweb.syr.edu/~mcclure/>.

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Appendix 2-A

Focus Group Interviews Research Method

There were ten libraries where focus group interviews were conducted. These ten libraries were selected by the advisors from the Library Development Office of the Office of Commonwealth Libraries. The advisors were targeting a group of diverse, yet representative collection of good libraries in the state. The selection criteria that was stated in the project proposal anticipated sites that have a "likelihood of obtaining high impact information describing library users; availability of participants; advice from local, state and District Library Center librarian; and ease of access by the study team." The selected libraries were located throughout the state and served rural, suburban and urban populations. The libraries that were selected were grouped by the type of population served and were the libraries as described in Table 1, "Focus Group Sites."

A contact person for each site was provided. The Research Assistant was responsible for contacting each site and negotiating a date for the interviews. Table 2, "Focus Group Dates," provides a list of the dates that the site visits occurred. The contact person for each of the libraries assisted the investigators set up a day for the focus group interviews.

The individual libraries were responsible for selecting all of the participants and for providing the general arrangements according to the guidelines provided by the investigators. The investigators were looking for individuals to participate in the focus group interviews who actively used their library and were reasonably familiar with some of its resources. The investigators were looking for individuals who received some benefit from the library and who was willing to share their insights with the investigators in a small group setting. The staff at the participating libraries selected all of the participants of the interviews sessions at their library.

There were usually four interviews conducted at each site. In general, the visit began with a tour of the library and its resources. The first focus group interview of the day included the director and sometimes others individuals such as district library center representatives, or the assistant director. Usually, there were from one to three participants in this session. The second interview session was of public service staff from the library; in many cases, public service staff from branches or from nearby associated public libraries also participated; in a few libraries that had a small number of paid staff members, library volunteers would also participate. Anywhere from three to ten or more participants took part in the public service staff interviews. The third interview session was a luncheon and the participants were community leaders, business leaders, local government officials, and/or prominent citizens. The number of participants in this session ranged from three to ten. The fourth and final session that was conducted at each site was an interview session with general library patrons. The number of participants in this session ranged from four to twenty-five participants.

One or two interviewers conducted the focus group interviews at each site. All of the participants for each session were gathered into one room. The interview script of questions was asked and the responses were written and recorded. Appendix 2-B is the interview script used for the interviews. There were two scripts used, one for the director and library staff, and another for the community/business leaders and patrons. In addition to the scripts, there was a list of topics about which the interviewers could query the participants if the script questions were not resulting in good data. Each participant filled out a questionnaire about their library use and about which services they received the greatest benefits. There were two questionnaires: one for the director and the library staff and another for the community leaders and library patrons. Appendices 2-C and 2-D are the questionnaires. In general, all four sessions were conducted at the library during one day.

The researchers were seeking to obtain the following information from the participants as outlined in the project proposal:

- Critical incidents where the use of library resources "made a difference" to the user and what the "difference" was
- Examples and stories of use of library services and materials that had important benefits to the user

- Degree to which the users use electronic information services from the home as a supplement or replacement to library services
- Library services or resources to which users would like to have access but presently does not
- Identification of other individuals in the community who the consultants might call later who have benefited significantly from using library services

The researchers were looking for anecdotes, stories and personal testimonies about the impact of the library. The information gathered through these interviews was used to create the reports on each of the libraries. These summary reports were used to create the final report.

TABLE 1
FOCUS GROUP SITES

SUBURBAN	URBAN	RURAL
Boyertown Community Library Boyertown, Berks County Reading District Library Center	Free Library of Philadelphia Philadelphia, Philadelphia County Philadelphia District Library Center	James V. Brown Library Williamsport, Lycoming County North Central District Library Center
Ludington Public Library Bryn Mawr, Montgomery County Norristown District Library Center	Allentown Public Library Allentown, Lehigh County Allentown District	Bellwood Antis Public Library Bellwood, Blair County Altoona District Library Center
East Shore Area Library Harrisburg, Dauphin County Harrisburg District Library Center	Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh Pittsburgh, Allegheny County Pittsburgh District Library Center	Susquehanna County Historical Society & Free Library Montrose, Susquehanna County Scranton District Library Center
Mt. Lebanon Public Library Pittsburgh, Allegheny County Pittsburgh District Library Center		

TABLE 2
FOCUS GROUP DATES

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SITE	DATE OF SITE VISIT
James V. Brown Library	2/18/98
Susquehanna County Historical Society & Free Library	2/19/98
Allentown Public Library	2/26/98
Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh	3/4/98 - 3/5/98
Mt. Lebanon Public Library	3/6/98
Ludington Public Library	3/17/98
Boyertown Community Library	3/19/98
Bellwood Antis Public Library	3/24/98
East Shore Area Library	3/25/98
Free Library of Philadelphia	3/26/98

There were a few unanticipated results that were a by-product of the interviews. Many patrons had previous never really given much thought to the benefit that they received from the library. Participating in the interviews forced library users to confront the value and utility of libraries that they had previously taken for granted. The sessions helped to educate the patrons about the library services that they appreciated. Many patrons didn't realize how their libraries were being funded - many assumed that their local taxes helped to support the libraries and this was seldom the case. Some patrons were especially enlightened as they erroneously believed that the library was run off donations by a volunteer staff. The library staff too benefited from hearing patrons concerns. The library users appreciated the library services to a degree that the staff was unaware; the staff of each library was gratified to learn that all of their efforts were appreciated. In some cases, the staff used the interview sessions to vent about serious issues that they confronted in their work. All in all, the focus group sessions initiated an active dialog about the benefits and impacts of library services in the communities visited.

Appendix 2-B

Focus Group Questions

Library Director

Describe the patron population. Describe the community overall.

How does your library impact/affect your community? What specific types of impacts have resulted?

How much community support is there for your library?

Does the library have any strategic partnerships with local businesses, community organizations or agencies? If so, please describe them.

Does the library have an impact on the segment of the community who that does not use the library? How is this segment affected?

What special services/programs/resources does the library offer?

How and how well does the library publicize its special programs/resources/services?

What challenges does your library face in increasing the impact of library programs/services/resources?

What evidence is available to document the impact of library programs and services on users?

What strategies should be used to demonstrate to state funding officials that public libraries make a difference?

Library Public Service Staff

Describe the user population.

What special services/programs/resources does the library offer and what kind of response to these services/programs/resources do patrons give?

How and how well does the library publicize its special programs/resources/services?

Does the library have any strategic partnerships with local businesses, community organizations or agencies? If so, please describe them.

What services/resources/programs would the library like to add that would have great impact on users?

What kind of impact does the library have on patrons? Can you name specific incidents where the library has made a significant impact?

What evidence is available to document the impact of library programs and services on users?

What suggestions do you have for how the library might have greater impact on the community?

What challenges do you face in providing services to your patrons that have high impact?

Business/Community Leaders

What kind of impact does the library have on the community?

What kind of financial impact does the library have on local businesses? Can you name specific incidents where the library has made a significant or measurable impact?

What kind of cooperation is there between the library and community organizations/social service agencies? Can you name specific instances where the library has made a contribution to community organizations or social service agencies?

Does your use of the Internet and other electronic information sources from your home or business supplement or replace library services? Please explain.

What can the library do to improve its services/resources to the business community? To community groups? To the community overall?. Please be as specific as possible.

Library Patrons

What are the most beneficial resources, services or programs? What are the top three reasons why you come to the library?

What services/resources would you like the library to offer?

If the library was to vanish tomorrow, how easy would it be to replace the service that you receive from the library? How would you replace the library services that you use? Explain.

Has your use of the Internet and other electronic information sources from your home or work supplemented or replaced library services? Please explain.

How has the library significantly impacted/improved your life? Can you name specific incidents where the library has made a positive impact?

How might library services/resources/programs have a greater impact on you?

To what degree are you willing to increase funding for improved library services and programs?

Appendix 2-C

Public Library Use in Pennsylvania

Participant Questionnaire - Library Personnel

Thank you for participating in this study of the impacts of Pennsylvania Libraries. Please complete this questionnaire. Your privacy will be protected.

1. Name: ______________________________

2. Institution: ______________________________

3. Current Position: ______________________________

4. Number of years in current position: ______

5. Have you served in other positions within the library besides the one that you currently hold?

_____ Yes_____ No

If yes, then please list previous positions.______________________________

____

6. What are the two special services/programs/resources are offered at your library that have the greatest impact on your users?

____

____

____

7. What specific types of impacts/benefits do these services/programs/resources have on library users?

____

____

____

8. In what areas can the library improve its services/programming/resources?

____

____

____

9. How might the library provide greater impact from its services/programs/resources?

____

____

____

Appendix 2-D

Public Library Use in Pennsylvania

Participant Questionnaire - Users

Thank you for participating in this study of the benefits and impacts of Pennsylvania public libraries. Please complete this questionnaire and return it to the interviewer before you leave. Your privacy will be protected.

1. Age: ____

2. Gender: _____ Male _____ Female

3. Occupation: ____

4. Highest level of education completed (Check one):
_____Elementary _____ High School _____ Community College _____College
_____Graduate/Professional School

5. Number of people in your household: _____

6. Number of library card-holders in your household: _____

7. Household income (check one):
___Less than $20,000 ___$20,000 - $39,999 ___$40,000-$69,999
___$70,000 and above

8. How often do you use this library (Check one):
___ More than once a week ___ Once a week ___ 2-3 times a month
___ Once a month ___ 2-11 times a year ___ Once a year or less

9. In your recent visits to the library, has the library assisted you in providing information services that:

		Yes	No
a)	Made you more productive on your job	___	___
b)	Helped you learn about new jobs or other business opportunities	___	___
c)	Helped you obtain a new job	___	___
d)	Supported starting a business on your own	___	___
e)	Promoted local businesses	___	___
f)	Contributed to your overall financial success	___	___

10. What are the two most important benefits that you receive from the library?

11. What are the most important benefits that you have received from this library? Please be specific.

Appendix 2-E

Critical Impact Log Method

Two libraries were selected from each of the twenty-eight District Library Centers (DLCs) to complete a critical incident desk log. A copy of the form used is included as Appendix 2-F. The libraries were selected by the DLC librarians - each DLC librarian was instructed to arrange for two libraries in their district to participate in this part of the study. The DLC librarians were instructed to select libraries which met the following criteria:

1. The libraries should be "high quality, know-their-users, deeply knowledgeable about the community and have an ability to either ask directly or extrapolate from a public session key or important impacts and benefits that resulted from that session."
2. The libraries selected should have a good public service staff who establishes good rapport with the community.
3. The libraries selected should be busy and proactive.
4. The libraries selected could be any kind of "public service outlet" including the district center.

The District Library Centers and participating libraries can be found on the following table:

District Library Center	DLC Library 1	DLC Library 2
ALIQUIPPA	Beaver County DLC, Aliquippa	Beaver Area Memorial Library
ALLENTOWN	Allentown Public	Emmaus Public
ALTOONA	Altoona Area Public Library	Bellwood-Antis Public Library
BELLEFONTE	Centre County Library	Mifflin County Library
BETHLEHEM	Bethlehem Area Public Library	Memorial Library of Nazareth and Vicinity
CHAMBERSBURG	Coyle Library (DLC)	Bookmobile of Franklin County
CHESTER	Chester County Library	Tredyffrin Public Library
DELAWARE	Marple Public Library	Landsdowne Public Library
DOYLESTOWN	Bucks County Public Library	Levotown Regional Library
EASTON	Eastern Monroe Public Library	Easton Area Public Library
ERIE	Erie County Public Library	Meadville Public Library
HARRISBURG	Elizabeth Area Branch Library	Lebanon Community Library
JOHNSTOWN	Cambria County Library	Meyersdale Public Library
LANCASTER	Lancaster County Library	Elizabethtown Public Library
MONESSEN	Monessen Public Library/DLC	Uniontown Public Library
NEW CASTLE	Cranberry Public Library	New Castle Public Library
NORRISTOWN	Norristown Public Library	Ludington Public Library
OIL CREEK	Oil City Library	Eccles Lesher Memorial Library
PHILADELPHIA	Greater Olney Branch	Welsh Road Branch
PITTSBURGH	Pittsburgh DLC/Carnegie	Shaler North Hills
POTTSVILLLE	Tamaqua Public Library	Schuylkill Haven Free Library
READING	Reading Public Library	Boyertown Community Library
SCRANTON	Scranton	Susquehanna County Historical Society and Free Library
WARREN	St. Marys Public Library	Bradford Area Public Library
WASHINGTON	Citizens Library	Peters Township Library
WILKES-BARRE	Osterhout Free Library	Hazeltown Area Library
WILLIAMSPORT	Bradford County, Troy	Priestley Forsyth Memorial Library
YORK	Adams County Library System	Martin Memorial Library

The participating libraries were instructed to collect nine critical public service encounters that likely resulted in high positive impact to the patron. The libraries were given the following instructions about collecting data:

1. Most public service sessions will not result in a log entry. The sessions need to be included on the log when they, "in the opinion of the of the librarian, made a significant impact, affected the patron's quality of life, or otherwise really 'made a difference'…that demonstrates the overall importance and impact of the library on users."
2. The type of sessions the researchers were especially soliciting include those where there is significant economic impact and those that provide "major improvements in the quality of life of the users."

The Office of Commonwealth Libraries distributed the forms to the participating libraries. The incidents were supposed to be collected from January 28 to February 10, 1998. Nine incidents were requested from each library. The libraries were instructed to return the forms by mail or fax to the principal investigator.

Appendix 2-F

PUBLIC LIBRARY USE IN PENNSYLVANIA: PUBLIC SERVICES IMPACTS LOG

Instructions: Thank you for agreeing to keep a log of instances where your provision of a service, a resource, or other library activity resulted in *significant* benefits or impacts for a library user or group. Include incidents from your personal experience during the January 28-February 10, 1998 time period or from incidents reported to you by other staff in the library. A significant benefit or impact is one that from the *users' perspective* markedly improved their personal, educational, economic, or other key aspect of their life; the benefit or impact may have had a dramatic effect such that the person was able to accomplish or do something that otherwise could not have been done had he/she not obtained this service from the library. We are especially interested in documenting significant economic impacts. You may glean the impacts from your interaction with the patron or you may wish to ask them to clarify the impacts. Once you have completed 9 instances on this log, return the form to Charles R. McClure, 7508 Northfield Lane, Manlius, NY 13104 (email any questions to McClure at cmcclure@mailbox.syr.edu).

Another purpose of the log is to identify library users who might be willing to meet in a focus group with the consultants conducting this study to discuss their use of the library. If possible please determine if the person you describe would be willing to meet in such a focus group at the library at some date in the future for no more than a one hour discussion session. **THANKS FOR YOUR HELP**.

Name:______________________________ **Name of Library:** __________________________________ **Phone/Email:**_________________

Item No.	Date	Library Service Used	Description of Incident	Benefit or Impacts on User	Availability for Focus Group? Name/Phone?
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					

107

108

Item No.	Date	Library Service Used	Description of Incident	Benefit or Impacts on User	Availability for Focus Group? Name/Phone?
6					
7					
8					
9					

NOTES OR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION (add below or attach additional pages) ?

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Appendix 2-G

Content Analysis Categories
Reference Desk Critical Incident Log

Incident should be categorized in the most specific category possible. If specific details are lacing in the report of the incident, place either in broadest category or in miscellaneous category.

Library Service Used

These categories are organized around three categories: materials, services/programs and resources.

1.0 Materials
1.1 General Reference Materials
1.1.1 Adult Reference Material
1.1.2 Children's Reference Material

1.2 General Collection Materials
1.2.1 Adult General Collection
1.2.2 Children's General Collection
1.2.3 Periodicals

1.3 Specialized Materials (Reference or General Collection)
1.3.1 Government Documents (e.g. tax forms, census materials, etc.)
1.3.2 Business/Small Business//Entrepreneurship Materials
1.3.3 Personal Finance/Personal Investment Materials
1.3.4 "How To" Materials
1.3.5 Medical/Health Materials
1.3.6 Legal Materials
1.3.9 Workplace

1.4 Special Collections or Materials
1.4.1 AudioBooks ("Books-on-tape")
1.4.2 Videotapes
1.4.3 Sound Recordings (e.g. CD's, cassette, DVDs, etc.)
1.4.4Genealogy/Local History Materials

2.0 Special Services/Programs:
2.1 "Outreach" Services/Programs
2.1.1 Bookmobile

2.2 General Library Services/Programs
2.2.1 General Reference Service
2.2.2 Reader's Advisory
2.2.3 Interlibrary Loan
2.2.4 Referrals

2.3 Children's Services/Programs
2.3.1 Story Hour
2.3.2 Homework Assistance
2.3.3 Special Children's Programming

2.4 Computer/Technology Services
2.4.1 Computer Training (non-Internet)
2.4.2 Internet/WWW training

2.5 Miscellaneous Services
2.5.1 Other Services or Programs
2.5.2 Tour of the Library

3.0 Technology and Environmental Resources:
3.1 Technology Resources
3.1.1 Computer Access (non-Internet)
3.1.2 Email Access
3.1.3 Internet/World Wide Web Access
3.1.4 Other Technological Resources

3.2 Other Resources
3.2.1 Community Rooms/Meeting Space
3.2.2 Quiet environment/pleasant space

Description of Incident

1.0 Asked a Reference Question

2.0 Used Library Materials -
2.1. Used Reference Materials
2.2. Used General Collection
2.3. Used Children's Materials
2.4 One's child or other family member used materials

3.0 Used Library Service

4.0 Participated in Library Program
4.1 Participated in program held in library but sponsored by other organization

5.0 Used Library Building
5.1 Used meeting space/community rooms
5.2 Used the physical space/environment
5.3 Used study rooms/carrels

6.0 Socialization/Networking/Informal Meeting place

7.0 Miscellaneous Incidents

Benefit or Impact to User

1.0 Economic
1.1 Saved Money
1.2 Made Money
1.3 Improved or Started Small Business/Home-Based Business
1.4 Helped to Make Good Consumer Decisions

2.0 Social
2.1 Exercise civic duties/responsibilities
2.2 Social Networking/

2.3 Meet New People
2.4 Community Development Activity

3.0 Personal
3.1 Saved Time
3.2 Enhanced Personal Fulfillment
3.3 Enhanced Relaxation
3.4 Increased Happiness/Joy
3.5 Assisted in Making More Informed Choices
3.6 Received Information that Allowed Peace-of-Mind
3.7 Gained access to Critical Information
3.8 Facilitated Recreational Activity
3.9 Enabled research
3.10 Encourage Love of Reading
3.11 Gained Access to General Information
3.12 Assisted in Accomplishing a Task or Reaching a Goal
3.13 Help Manage Personal Finances
3.14 Helped Family/Friends

4.0 Medical/Legal
4.1 Helped understand a medical condition/diagnosis/treatment
4.2 Helped to understand law, regulation, legal procedure, etc.

5.0 Educational
5.1 Improved Literacy
5.2 Helped with primary education of self or child
5.3 Helped with formal secondary education
5.4 Helped with graduate/professional education
5.5 Facilitated Lifelong learning
5.6 Gained or Improved Computer Skills
5.7 English As A Second Language

6.0 Vocational
6.1 Helped Perform Job Better/ Help with Work
6.2 Helped to Get a Job/Help With Job Search
6.3 Helped with Career Decisions

APPENDIX 3-A
PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC LIBRARY USER SURVEY

Instructions: Please complete this short survey and return it to the survey return box. Information from this survey will be used to better understand who uses what types of library services, so **YOUR HELP IS ESSENTIAL**. Please take a moment to complete this survey. **THANK YOU! [PLEASE DO NOT FOLD THE SURVEY FORM]**

LIBRARY USE ONLY. DO NOT WRITE IN THIS AREA.

Library ID Number: ☐☐☐ County Code: ☐☐

Fill in the circle completely to indicate your response:

Please tell us about yourself

Like this: ☐; Not this: ☐ ☐ ☐

Age:
☐ Under 18 ☐ 35-44 ☐ 65 or over
☐ 18-25 ☐ 45-54
☐ 26-34 ☐ 55-64

Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

The occupation that *best* describes what I do is:
(mark one)
☐ Student
☐ Teacher
☐ Public servant (e.g., federal, state, local gov. employee)
☐ Business person (e.g., self-employed, small business owner)
☐ Professional (e.g., attorney, physician)
☐ Homemaker
☐ Currently unemployed
☐ Other

Highest level of education:
(mark one)
☐ Have not completed high school
☐ High school or equivalent
☐ Some college
☐ Community college (e.g., completed AAS)
☐ College (e.g., completed BA or BS)
☐ Graduate school (e.g., completed MA or MS, Ph.D.)
☐ Professional degree (e.g., JD, MD)

Annual household income:
(mark one)
☐ Less than $20,000
☐ $20,000-$29,999
☐ $30,000-$39,999
☐ $40,000-49,999
☐ $50,000-$59,999
☐ $60,000-$69,999
☐ Over $70,000

[OVER]

Please tell us about your use of the library/library services

Your reason(s) for coming to the library today is:
(mark all that apply)

- ☐ Check out/return materials (e.g., books, videos)
- ☐ Browse library material (e.g., magazines, reports)
- ☐ Attend a library program (e.g., story hour, lecture, training)
- ☐ Use a meeting room (e.g., a library conference room)
- ☐ Ask a reference question
- ☐ Find specific information on my own
- ☐ Study
- ☐ Use the Internet
- ☐ Other (please describe):

In your recent visits to the library, has the library assisted you in providing information or services that:
(mark all that apply)

		Yes	**No**
a)	Made you more productive on your job	☐	☐
b)	Helped you learn about new jobs or other business opportunities	☐	☐
c)	Helped you obtain a new job	☐	☐
d)	Supported starting a business on your own	☐	☐
e)	Promoted your use of a local business	☐	☐
f)	Contributed to your overall financial success	☐	☐
g)	Supported your education in a ***formal*** school, college, or university class	☐	☐
h)	Contributed to your learning and education but ***not*** via a formal classroom setting	☐	☐
i)	Helped you locate and/or use a PA business	☐	☐
j)	Helped you obtain information that you could not have gotten elsewhere	☐	☐
k)	Introduced you to new technologies (e.g., the Internet)	☐	☐
l)	Encouraged you to go out and get your own Internet account from a local/other Internet service provider (e.g., America OnLine, Prodigy)	☐	☐

What has been the single-most impact of this public library on you?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

Appendix 3-B
User Survey Instructions

Thank you for assisting us in the Office of Commonwealth Libraries-sponsored Library Services/Marketing project. Through this survey, we hope to get user feedback concerning (1) their general use of the library, (2) the usefulness of library services, and (3) the impact of library services. Your help in administering this survey will be critical to our ability to get this much needed data.

General Survey Information

You have received a packet containing the following:
(1) 30 surveys;
(2) A library identification sheet; and,
(3) A return envelope.

The below instructions will guide you through the survey distribution and collection process. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact John Bertot (contact information listed below).

Each survey has an area designated "LIBRARY USE ONLY." It is important that you enter two pieces of information here on **EACH** survey:

- The library's three-digit identification number. This is indicated on the enclosed library information sheets. Each library has an identification number from 001 through 625. Please enter the identification number corresponding to your library in the "Library ID Number" field, on **EACH** survey.
- The county in which your library resides. Please enter the name of the county where this library resides in the "County" field.

Survey Distribution

We are asking that you and/or a library volunteer administer this survey between March 9 and March 15, 1998. The library may wish to post some signs that a survey will be in progress during this one-week period, and set up a return survey box.

We expect you to obtain 30 ***completed surveys*** during that week. If your library is not able to get 30 ***completed*** surveys during that time, send however many completed surveys your library has by the end of the week in the enclosed envelope to John Bertot at the address below. **PLEASE do not fold the surveys**.

Survey Completion

To administer the survey, please ask patrons to complete the survey form based on their experiences with library services that day in particular and other days in general. Tell the users that this survey will inform the maintenance of current and development of future library services.

The survey has two components: (1) user demographics, to get a general sense of library services users, and (2) specific library services questions. At the ***end of the week***, or when you have 30 ***completed surveys***, send the surveys in the enclosed envelope to:

Dr. John Bertot
Department of Information Systems
University of Maryland Baltimore County
1000 Hilltop Circle
Baltimore, MD 21250
(410) 455-3883 phone; (410) 455-1073 fax; <bertot@umbc.edu> e-mail

This is a very important survey -- your assistance is essential. Thank you for all your help!